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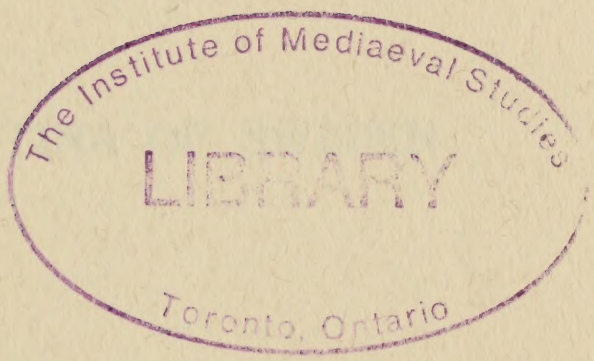
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CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

From an engraving by Tardieu after a painting by S. Bourdon.

Christine, Queen of Sweden.

CHRISTINA *of* SWEDEN

by I. A. TAYLOR

Author of "Lord Edward Fitzgerald", "Queen Henrietta Maria", "Queen Hortense and Her Friends", "Lady Jane Grey and Her Times", etc

New Edition

WITH NUMEROUS PORTRAITS

LONDON
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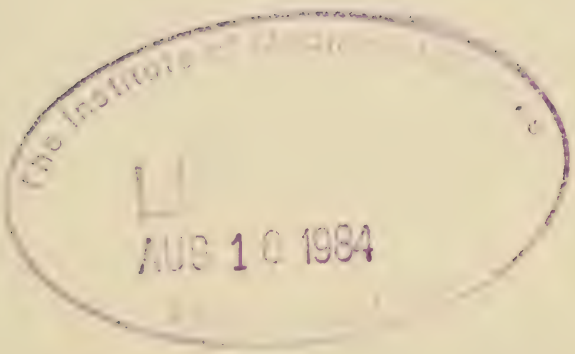
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PREFATORY NOTE

CHRISTINA of Sweden has sometimes been considered one of those problems that history has failed to solve. "On est en peine," says Arvède Barine, "de décider si elle fut sincère, ou si elle se moqua de l'Europe." At first sight the doubt may seem to be justified, but when the evidence has been examined it will be found that there is little to support it. What Christina believed herself to be, that she strove to show herself to the world. Her inordinate self-satisfaction robbed her of any motive to appear other than she was.

Of data to enable the student to arrive at a comprehension of her singular character there is no lack. Her life, from childhood upwards, was lived in public; she was, from first to last, a centre of interest. Her enemies were envenomed, her friends enthusiastic; all had much to say and to write about her. Above all, her numerous letters, her maxims, the fragment of her autobiography, supply abundance of material for the formation of a conclusion. "One should speak neither good nor ill of oneself," she once wrote, "and should occasions arise when one is perhaps compelled to do so, it should be done in few words and ended as quickly as possible." But the occasions when Christina found herself called upon to take the world into her confidence

were, fortunately for her biographers, many. "Sous le nom de sa vie," says Rousseau of another, "il fait son apologie." Christina was ever engaged in making her apology, and whether or not we may be successful in divining her true nature and character, no doubt is left as to her own estimate of it.

Christina has been the subject of many books in divers languages. The four quarto volumes printed by M. Arckenholtz in the middle of the eighteenth century contain, in an immense and confused mass of matter, most of what was known about her at that date, in the shape of memoirs, autobiographical fragments or notes, original compositions, letters and *pièces justificatives*, with foot-notes including copious quotations from other writers. Episodes or phases of her career, such as her relations with Descartes, or her life in Italy, have been separately treated. Madame de Motteville and Mademoiselle de Montpensier, amongst contemporaries, have left detailed accounts of her visits to France. Scandal-mongers have made themselves busy with her private life and her household. But incomparably the most valuable of later writings are the two volumes—*Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, and *Christine de Suède et le Conclave de Clément X.*—by the Baron de Bildt, containing a large number of her letters, hitherto unpublished, to Cardinal Azzolino.

As in the case of all strongly marked characters, opinions concerning Christina are likely to differ widely. By some critics, once more to quote Arvède Barine, she will be regarded, in spite of her intellectual brilliancy, as "un monstre au moral." Some, judging her by the most notorious incident of her life, will call her, with

Walpole, an heroic murderess. But others, allowing their due weight to extenuating circumstances, will abstain from wholesale condemnation. Her own language, in the dedication of her memoirs to God, is, notwithstanding the acknowledgment of faults and failings, the language of a saint. Christina, it is certain, was no saint. Whether her record was as dark as it has been considered in some quarters the reader must decide.

The greater number of the portraits are taken from the original pictures in Sweden, and have been procured by the kindness of Sir Cecil Spring Rice, British Minister at Stockholm.

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CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

CHAPTER I

1626–32

Birth—Parentage—The Thirty Years' War—Gustavus joins in it—Christina's childhood—Letters to her father—His forebodings—And death.

CHRISTINA, daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, was born at Stockholm on December 8, 1626.

Her birth had been eagerly and anxiously awaited. The daughter already born to Gustavus and his wife, Marie-Eleonore of Brandenburg, was dead and Sweden still without an heir. Astrologers, after the fashion of the day, had been busy with the approaching event, and had predicted that it was destined to prove fatal to either father, mother, or child. It had also been foretold that the infant would be a boy. Both predictions were falsified; although when the brown, harsh-voiced baby first appeared it was believed for a moment by those standing round that their hopes had been crowned, and that a son had been granted to the King.

"She will be clever," Gustavus afterwards observed. "She took us all in."

When the truth was manifest, keen disappointment prevailed, the King's sister, Catherine, being charged with the duty of breaking the news to her brother.

It was received by him with a resignation astonishing to those who estimated aright the importance, to King and country, of an heir-male. The Princess had performed her task with the new-born child in her arms, and, taking it into his own, Gustavus gave thanks to God.

"I hope," he added, "that this girl will be worth as much to me as a boy. I pray God that, having bestowed her upon me, He may preserve her," ordering that the public rejoicings should be attended with no less solemnity than in the case of a Prince of Sweden.

When Christina herself was of an age to express an opinion upon the subject, she found no fault with the decree of Providence which had made her a woman. Although indulging a profound contempt for the generality of her sex, she went so far, addressing herself to God,[1] as to give thanks that she had been born a girl, "the rather that, through Thy favour, I have escaped, even in matters spiritual, the weaknesses of my sex, my soul, as well as my body, having been rendered by Thy grace virile. Thou hast made use of my sex to preserve me from the vices and dissipation of the country of my birth ; and, having condemned me to belong to the weaker sex, Thou hast exempted me from the frailties natural to it. . . . Suffer me to admire the goodness which has so favoured me as to build upon my greatest defect my merits and my fortunes."

Her mother was less submissive than Gustavus to the decree of fate. The child was not only a girl, but was, at this early stage of her career, a plain one ; and Marie-Eleonore, unlike her daughter by no means free from feminine foibles, found it difficult to forgive her lack of beauty.

The daughter of one Elector of Brandenburg and the sister of another, Eleonore had been married by

[1] Arckenholtz, *Vie de Christine, écrite par elle-même*, t. iii., p. 23.

Gustavus when, after an obstinate struggle lasting over six years, the great soldier had been vanquished by those of his own household, and had reluctantly abandoned, in deference to the views of his mother and his Council, his intention of making Ebba Brahe, the companion of his childhood and the love of his early youth, his wife. Yet, though in some sort a marriage of convenience, other motives had entered into his union with the Brandenburg Princess. It was not until, visiting Berlin incognito, he had inspected in person the bride proposed to him, that he had consented to seek her in marriage; whilst the obstacles interposed by her father and brother, rigid in their Calvinism and objecting to the arrangement on account of Gustavus's profession of the Lutheran creed, may have served, as opposition is wont to do, to quicken the young King's desire to obtain her as a wife. At all events, in the spring of 1620, when the negotiations, having lasted over two years, showed no sign of being brought to a successful termination, Gustavus took matters into his own hands, paid a second visit, again semi-incognito, to Germany, and, with the approval and aid of the mother of the bride-elect—who belonged to his faith—the two were formally betrothed. By October of the same year Eleonore had been escorted to Sweden, and the marriage was celebrated at Stockholm on November 25. Six years later Christina was born.

When she first opened her eyes upon a world she was to find so full of interest and where she was to play so conspicuous a part, the bloody drama of the Thirty Years' War—in no long time to cost her father his life—had been already eight years in progress. In 1618 the smouldering animosities of Catholics and Protestants had burst into flame, and the struggle only to be terminated by the Peace of Westphalia had begun.

At that early stage of the momentous conflict

between the Emperor and the Evangelical Union, Gustavus Adolphus, occupied with wars of his own, had declined to be drawn into the contest; nor was it until 1630 that a six-years' truce with Poland left him free to turn his attention to the broader issues at stake, and he finally threw in his lot with the Protestant belligerents.

When the King decided upon drawing his sword he did it with a full apprehension of the gravity of the situation. Although a soldier by profession, and the greatest captain of his age, he was never blind to the risks to be run, nor to the uncertainty of the result.

"I look henceforth," he said, "for no more tranquillity before entering into eternal felicity."

The words were prophetic, but the period of labour was not to be prolonged. By November 1632—he was only thirty-eight—his battles were over, and his little daughter, at six years old, had become Queen of Sweden.

Her intercourse with the father she was so soon to lose had been limited to the short intervals during which he could be spared from the scene of war, and her final parting with him took place when she was no more than four. Even at that age the affection of the King may have made an impression upon the keen-witted, open-eyed child, the rather because of the contrast it presented to the indifference, or what Christina herself considered the worse than indifference, of her mother. It is not indeed credible that the suspicions she afterwards entertained that her death would not have been unwelcome to Eleonore were well founded, yet the fact that she could indulge them is eloquent; and one of the accidents she was inclined to ascribe to sinister motives had the permanent effect of leaving one shoulder slightly higher than the other—"a defect," she observed, "I could have cured had I taken the trouble to do so."

From the original painting.

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS, KING OF SWEDEN.

p. 4]

Eleonore might be a careless mother, but Gustavus loved his little daughter. With claimants to the Swedish succession boasting their descent from an elder branch of the royal house, he must have been aware of the uncertainty of her future, should he be withdrawn from the scene ; and, when she was scarcely over a year old, he had caused the assembled Estates to swear allegiance to her as his heir. It was his policy, thenceforth, to keep the child, as much as possible, before the public eye. When he reviewed his troops she was at his side ; he took her with him on progresses in the provinces, and insisted that she should thus early begin to occupy the place that, should no son be born to him, would be hers. She was a soldier's daughter, and must accustom herself to a soldier's life, he once answered when the question had been raised whether it would not be well to omit the usual salute on his arrival at a fortress, lest the thunder of the cannon should terrify a child only in her second year ; and his satisfaction was manifest when, instead of terror, she showed pleasure at the sound of the guns.

It was in May 1630 that father and daughter parted for the last time, Gustavus having then, after anxious and prolonged deliberation, finally resolved to delay no more his participation in the great struggle going forward in Germany. If he had been slow in arriving at his decision, his determination once taken, he had over-ridden all the objections that could be urged against it. The Chancellor, Oxenstiern, might point out the poverty of the country, the superiority of the forces at the Emperor's command, and might prophesy disaster ; but he was compelled to admit that the King was moved by a spirit none might resist. The Estates of Sweden, convened for the purpose of discussing the question, might acknowledge the risks and difficulty involved in carrying on a war on so large a scale, but no one was found to lift his voice in protest

against it. The cause in which King and people were to imperil their lives and fortunes was, in the eyes of all, a crusade ; a general spirit of enthusiasm prevailed over material considerations ; and money was freely granted on behalf of the enterprise.

In the hall of the Diet, before the assembled Estates of the realm, Gustavus stood, his four-year-old child in his arms, whilst the Act assuring the succession to Christina was recited and the oath of fidelity was tendered. As the King commended his daughter to the care of his faithful subjects his eyes were wet, and the response to his appeal was made with tears.

It would appear that Christina was already anxious to enjoy her full measure of attention and, perceiving that her father was listening absently to the short speech she had been taught, took steps to recall his wandering thoughts. She afterwards asserted, on the authority of those around her, that she had wept for three days after his departure, thereby endangering her sight, which was naturally weak.

Whether or not that statement is to be credited, it is certain that Christina had cause for tears. Ten days after the scene in the Diet, Gustavus had quitted the country upon the hazardous adventure which was to cost him his life. For the guardianship of his daughter he had arranged with care. His union with her mother had been happy, but he had never deceived himself as to her capacities, and his estimate of them was explicitly declared in the exclusion of Eleonore from any participation in affairs of State. Like many men overwhelmed with business, he had adhered to the principle of keeping his private and domestic life apart from public interests and responsibilities, maintaining silence at home with regard to the latter, and probably finding relaxation in his wife's ignorance. Taking pleasure in Eleonore's beauty and in its adornment, he had no desire that she should be troubled by his graver cares. In

pursuance of this system, she was given no place in the Regency established during his absence, whose authority was to be shared by the Senate.[1] Even Christina herself was consigned to the charge of his sister, to whose husband, John Casimir, Prince Palatine, the financial affairs of the country were entrusted. Eleonore, so far as power and influence were concerned, was practically non-existent.

To the period covered by the German campaign belong two communications addressed by the little Christina to her absent father. He had enjoined upon those to whose care she was committed that she was to be permitted to write her own letters; and these documents are evidently the composition of a forward child, the wording of the one differing little from that of the other.

"Gracious and Well-beloved Lord and Father," she wrote, "To your royal Majesty my filial and obedient service, wishing you much health from Almighty God, for the consolation of your faithful daughter. I pray that it may soon be your Majesty's will to come back, and that you may send me some pretty thing. I am, thank God, well, and am striving to learn to pray always well.

"Your royal Majesty's obedient daughter,

"CHRISTINA, P.S."

"Most Gracious and Beloved Lord and Father," the second missive runs, "Not having the happiness of being near your royal Majesty, I humbly send you my portrait, praying your Majesty that it may call me to your remembrance; and that you may soon come back to me, sending me meanwhile some pretty thing. Thank God, I am well. God give us always good

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 29.

tidings of your Majesty. To Him I commend you always, and remain

"Your royal Majesty's obedient daughter,

"CHRISTINA, P.S." [1]

The stiff little letters, with the spontaneous demand for gifts breaking through the prescribed formality of the language, are undated, and we are left in ignorance of the circumstances under which they were read by the great soldier, haunted, as it would seem, by the foreboding of a hurrying doom. The exaggerated importance attached to his life appeared to him to portend its extinction, since too much trust was thereby placed in a mere mortal. Victory, the success of his plans and his arms, failed to reassure him, the very acclamations hailing, shortly before his death, his return to Saxony supplying him with fresh grounds for apprehension.

"Our affairs are going well," he told his chaplain, "but I fear God may punish me on account of the madness of the people. Would it not be said that these men regard me as divine? He who terms Himself a jealous God may well make it manifest to them that I am no more than a weak mortal."

To his faithful Chancellor and friend, he opened his heart in a letter written nearly two years before his death. All was promising; his operations had been attended with success from the day when, first stepping on German soil, he had, kneeling, consecrated his coming work, and told his followers that "to pray often was almost to conquer." [2] "The snow-king," the Austrians had jeered, "would melt as he approached the southern sun"; their prophecy had not proved true. City after city had surrendered, the Duke of Pomerania had become his ally, and Tilly, the great Bavarian general, had been forced to confess that the King of Sweden

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 2. [2] Stevens, *Gustavus Adolphus*, p. 277.

was a gamester in playing with whom not to have lost was to have won much.[1] Yet in his language there is none of the confidence of the conqueror, none of the bravado of the soldier.

"If the cause is good," he wrote to Oxenstiern after describing the situation, "the issue of the war is nevertheless, by reason of sin, uncertain. The life of man cannot be counted upon; and therefore, I exhort you, and beseech you, for the love of Christ, not to lose courage should all not succeed according to our desires." And then follows a more personal appeal—the appeal, not only of master to servant, but of friend to friend. "I conjure you to bear in mind the memory of me and the welfare of my family, and to do unto me and mine what you would that God should do unto you and yours, and which, in like case, I will do for you and yours, should it be His pleasure that I should survive you, and that those belonging to you should have need of me."

With pardonable pride, he adverts to his record during the twenty years elapsed since, scarcely more than a boy, he had assumed the reins of government; to the sacrifices he had made for country and people, living only to perform the duties of his station. And in the name of the services he had thus rendered to Sweden he claims a return, to be made not to himself, but to those who, in case of his death, would be left behind. Should aught befall him, the mother, destitute of counsel, the little child, would be worthy, for his sake and for manifold other reasons, of compassion—"unfortunate, should they themselves bear rule; in danger, should others rule them."[2]

Thus Gustavus wrote to the servant upon whose fidelity he could rely. His anxiety was not uncalled for. With death awaiting him upon every battle-field,

[1] Stevens, *Gustavus Adolphus*, p. 288.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 17, 18.

past perils and hair-breadth escapes the earnest of dangers to come, he might well take thought for country, wife, and child. So long as he was at hand to steer the ship no other pilot was needed, nor was he a man to delegate responsibility; but at a distance from home and with the uncertainty of life ever before him, a keen regret may have made itself felt that in the hands of such a mother his child would be left, in case of disaster.

So far as he could neutralise the risk, he had done so. His orders had been definite and explicit. Should he die, he directed Oxenstiern to serve, honour, and help his wife in her affliction; he was no less decided in desiring that she should be excluded from any association in public affairs or in her daughter's education.[1] The position she occupied during his absence in Germany was to continue the same during that longer absence he contemplated as a not improbable contingency, the stringency of his orders being explained not only by Eleonore's incapacity for business, but by the dislike she entertained, notwithstanding her love for her husband, for his country and people. Had she had a voice in the training of her daughter it was feared that, inspiring Christina with her sentiments, she might succeed in marrying her to some powerful foreign prince.[2]

The position was difficult and in a measure humiliating to the Queen. There was no doubt that her husband loved her; it was made equally clear that his love in no way blinded him to her imperfections and failings. Whether or not she resented the slight implied in his arrangements, Eleonore's devotion to him seems to have suffered no diminution; and when his brilliant career—not two years after his letter to Oxenstiern had been written—found its premature

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 33.
[2] Puffendorf, quoted by Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 34.

close on the battle-field of Lützen, she mourned him passionately. Described as, even in her normal condition, "toujours plaintive," she was one of the women who seek consolation in the trappings of grief and take refuge from genuine sorrow in outward ceremonial and funeral pomp, and the tokens of affection she bestowed upon the dead are described by Christina as so excessive as to demand pardon rather than justification.[1]

Mourned or unmourned, Gustavus was gone, the place he had filled in the great struggle vacant. In after-days Christina pronounced a dispassionate judgment upon her father. Wise, brave, a great captain, a great king, she noted his generosity, the liberality he combined with economy. A reasonably good speaker, he was fond of letters. Violent and hasty, he cared overmuch for women, and, though no lover of wine, yet he drank. Familiar in intercourse with his friends, he treated the soldiers under him with reserve. He had great virtues, great talents, and few failings. If everything contributed to his greatness, that greatness was chiefly due to opportunities by which he had the gift of profiting. The world, his daughter added, had not only done him justice, but had ascribed to him all that had happened long after his death, and which Christina, it is clear, considered would have been more rightly ascribed to herself.[2]

Thus, with the cool discrimination of a daughter to whom her father was no more than a childish memory, Christina traced the portrait of the great Protestant champion.

[1] Puffendorf, quoted by Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 40.
[2] *Ibid.*, t. iii., pp. 19, 20, 30, 31.

CHAPTER II

1632–41

Christina's accession—Regency and guardianship—Her childhood and training, secular and religious—Her relations with her mother—Gustavus Adolphus's funeral—The Estates of the Realm and the Queen's education—Letters.

THE death of Gustavus—a matter of open or secret rejoicing in many quarters—was a crushing blow to Sweden. A child of six was a poor substitute for the dead leader, and an incident which occurred when, before the assembled Estates of the Realm, the Marshal of the Diet proposed that Christina should be proclaimed Queen, was an earnest of possible difficulties in the future.

"Who is this daughter of Gustavus?" demanded a member of the Order of Peasants bluntly. "We do not know her, nor have we ever seen her."

Murmurs from those present corroborated the objection, but the Marshal was equal to the occasion.

"If you desire it, I will show her to you," he answered, perceiving prompt action to be necessary;[1] and, withdrawing at once, he returned with the child; whom he led into the Hall of Assembly and displayed to the Estates, exhibiting her more particularly to the deputy—one Lars Larsons—who had given voice to the general discontent. After a close examination the latter declared himself satisfied.

"It is she," he admitted. "She has the nose, the

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 23.

eyes, and the brow of Gustavus. Let her be our Queen."

Her proclamation followed; Christina's succession to her father's throne was confirmed by the vote of the General Assembly of the people, called together for that purpose, the Regency being entrusted, as during the King's life-time, to five great officers of state. On Oxenstiern, chief amongst them, was conferred almost unlimited power of making peace and war, the principal question of the hour; whilst the personal guardianship of the Queen remained in the hands of her father's sister, the Princess Palatine. The husband of the Princess, on the other hand, regarded as the father of sons who might aspire, through marriage with Christina, to the throne, was deprived of the superintendence of the national finances confided to him by the late King. The jealousy of the Prince Palatine thus manifested was again apparent when, some little time later, he sought the advice of the Senate as to whether his children should be brought up after the Swedish or the German fashion; the answer returned making it clear that the source of his anxiety to conform to public opinion had been shrewdly penetrated. The point raised, the Senate coldly replied, related to a private affair with which they had nothing to do. It was for the Prince, as a father, to decide upon the training of his children.

In the meantime Christina had taken kindly to the trade of Kingship, receiving, with a child's gratified pride, the personal homage of her subjects, and enchanted at the sight of them kneeling at her feet and kissing her hand. In an autobiography begun by her in her elder age, and unfortunately including no more than eight years of her life,[1] she has given a picture of her childhood, partly founded upon memory, more

[1] Arckenholtz, *Vie de Christine, écrite par elle-même.*

upon reports suspected even by herself of flattery. Yet the portrait is worth noting, containing as it does what Christina regarded as the opening of that strange, many-coloured story she calls her life. The eyes see what they look for, and memory is in some sort an index to character.

Through the mist of the years which lay between what she had once been and the woman she had become, Christina saw the figure of a little crowned child—a child to whom majesty and command came by nature, and who, endowed with the wisdom not always conferred by years and a painful miracle in childhood, presented an impressive spectacle to an astonished nation: "I was small, but my air and bearing upon the throne was such as to inspire all with respect and fear." God had set upon her brow the stamp of greatness. When other children might have wept or slumbered, it was her custom to take her part, without impatience or weariness, in ceremonials, to listen to harangues, receiving the homage paid her by her subjects as one to whom it was due. Nor was this all. She saw herself with a heart gifted by God—to Whom the record of her early life was dedicated—with nobleness and greatness, a soul to match it, and a longing for truth, virtue, glory, and knowledge.

Defects she indeed allowed to mar the picture, confessing that she was distrustful and suspicious, and likewise ambitious to excess. "Passionate and violent, proud, impatient, scornful and mocking, I gave quarter to none."

If it was thus that Christina, turning her gaze backward in far-distant days, saw herself as she stood on the threshold of life, a little pilgrim scarcely entered upon her journey, to the student the picture takes on a different colour. The figure of a poor solitary child rises before his eyes, fatherless, sisterless, brother-

less ; with a mother incapable of affording her guidance or help ; surrounded by flatterers who magnified her importance and ministered to her self-love ; with a brain alert, eager, crammed with knowledge, anxious for more ; none at hand to deplore her unnatural precocity of learning, none to deprecate and control a child's ambition to render herself conspicuous in other ways besides birth and position, a child's vanity in rising superior to the ordinary laws of health ; eating little, sleeping little, making her boast of indifference to bodily fatigue. Actuated sometimes, it may be, by worthier motives, her governing impulse is explained in one significant sentence when she says, "Je faisois une vie si extraordinaire malgré tout le monde." In spite of all the world—also perhaps because of all the world, and because it was fitting that the Queen of Sweden should be unlike those other children who ate and drank and slept and played and were happy.

No misgivings assailed her, and even at a later time, when she might have grown wiser, she never doubted that not only by race and blood, but by gifts and graces, she had been highly favoured by Heaven. "Thou alone knowest," she adds, "whether I have duly responded to favours so manifold. Appearing to myself and to others what I am not, I might be deceived. Thee I could not deceive, for Thou art acquainted with the work of Thy hands."

Apart from the adulation of sycophants, it was not likely that Christina would meet with overmuch criticism from her subjects. The fact that she was the orphan daughter of their lost King, together with the precariousness of her position, would have sufficed to cause them to look upon her with indulgent eyes and to enlist their chivalry on her behalf. In their eyes, as in her own, she was a brilliant exception to the ordinary course of human nature.

If her training was not judicious, it was due to no lack of care and thought. Gustavus, taking the chances of life and death into account, had carefully provided for her bringing up, in case he should not be at hand to give it his personal supervision. It was his desire that, being called to be a monarch, she should receive a man's education, and that, "save in virtue and modesty," she should be trained rather as a boy than a girl. In his wife, it may be, he had had experience of a strictly feminine nature which had indisposed him to desire its development in her daughter.[1] In these views Christina fully concurred. Throughout her life she had no love for women, declaring that if she liked men it was not so much because they were men as because they were not women. "I had," she said, "an invincible antipathy to all that women do and say." It was, therefore, doubtless with her full approval that she was forthwith entrusted to masculine care, her governor being one Axel Baner—the companion and comrade of the King in his pleasures; uneducated, violent, and addicted to wine, but honest withal and a man upon whose fidelity Gustavus could rely. His subordinate was Gustavus Horn, a courtier of more culture, and acquainted with foreign countries and languages. The little Queen's tutor was John Matthiæ, afterwards a Bishop, versed in science and letters, and well calculated, by gentleness and kindness, to win a child's affection and respect.

To impart secular knowledge to the Queen was an easy task. One of those children to whom a prudent wisdom would have given few lessons and much play, she learnt eagerly and easily, displaying something approaching to a passion for study. Religion was another matter, and, in spite of her affection for her tutor, she was from the first a rebel to the principles he sought to instil, manifesting from childhood upwards

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 52.

a spirit of restless and personal inquiry with regard to theological questions.

The religion of Sweden was not calculated to commend itself to a mind like that of Christina. As her countryman, Baron de Bildt, has pointed out,[1] the Reformation in that country had been of a political rather than a religious character ; a revolt from foreign influence rather than from dogma. Nor was the Lutheran yoke appreciably lighter than that imposed by the Vatican : " Quant à la liberté de conscience—ce rêve généreux des premières années de la Réforme—il en restait bien peu dans la nouvelle Église protestante." A body devoid of the credentials conferred by ancient custom and authority, a worship stripped of much of its beauty and grandeur, was adapted to make its appeal neither to the imagination nor to the heart ; and Christina has left it upon record that a spirit of incredulous distrust was not long in wakening within her. An incident belonging to her seventh or eighth year denotes, even at that early age, an absence of that convenient disposition to accept an article of faith whilst allowing it to remain abstract and inoperative found by their instructors so desirable in children.[2] Taken for the first time to the annual sermon upon the subject of the Last Judgment, the nervous child was reduced by the eloquence of the preacher to a condition of abject terror. The foundations of heaven and earth seemed shaken and destruction imminent.

" What is the meaning of this, father ? " she demanded of Matthiæ. " Why have you never spoken to me of this terrible day ? What will become of me on that day ? Is all this to take place this night ? "

Matthiæ laughed.

" You will go to Paradise," he assured her soothingly.

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, p. 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

"But in order to go there you must be obedient to your tutor, pray to God, and study."

When, the following year, the sermon was repeated, the little Queen, though not unmoved, was less disturbed, and though she catechised her preceptor, it was without tears.

"When is this judgment of which they talk so much to take place?" she inquired, with a touch of superciliousness. Matthiæ was not prepared to say.

"It will come, it will come," he replied vaguely. "Do not disquiet yourself about it. But God alone knows when it will be, and one must be prepared."

The answer was unsatisfactory to his cross-examiner. Worse, it raised doubts in her mind, if not of her tutor's personal good faith, of the veracity of his creed. When the third year brought a repetition of the scene and a reiterated threat of approaching destruction, the Queen laughed. Nor did she allow the matter to rest there. Interrupting her studies one day, she recurred to it bluntly.

"Speak the truth," she said. "Is all they tell us of religion as much a fable as this of the Last Judgment?" And though, sharply reprimanded by Matthiæ and even menaced with the whip, she was silent for the future, her doubts were only driven underground. "I believed nothing," she afterwards declared, "of the religion in which I was brought up. . . . All they told me of it seemed to me unworthy of Thee"—she is addressing Almighty God. "I thought men made of Thee their mouthpiece, and that they wished to deceive and frighten me for their private ends." Hating the long discourses of Lutheran preachers, she nevertheless recognised the fact that she must have patience and conceal her sentiments; forming, as she grew older, a species of religion of her own, and praying meanwhile for enlightenment.[1]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., pp. 209-10. This statement, which rests upon

Whilst such was her condition with regard to matters spiritual, her secular education was making more satisfactory progress. Always fond of intellectual pursuits, her school-room had also become a place of refuge and a means of escape from the uncongenial companionship of her mother.

In accordance with the singular custom of the day, the funeral ceremonies of Gustavus Adolphus had been strangely prolonged, nor was it till close upon two years after his death that his body was finally brought to be laid to rest in his native land, Marie-Eleonore herself forming part of the escort by which it was accompanied to Sweden.

To a child of eight the events of two years ago can scarcely fail to belong to an unremembered past, and Christina frankly confessed that, by the time she was conducted, by the entire Court, to Nyköping, there to meet her dead father and her living mother, she had long been consoled for the loss of the first. She had also probably come near to forgetting the mother who —in contrast to the indifference with which she had formerly regarded the child—had now developed for her an excessive and inconvenient affection, "drowned her in tears, and almost suffocated her in embraces." More serious still, Eleonore did not only herself keep up the observances of desolation, but insisted upon Christina sharing in them, whilst she awaited the accomplishment of the final ceremonies connected with her husband's obsequies.

Rarely can a pair have been more ill-assorted. Had the funeral followed at once upon the death of the King, it is possible that the imagination of even so practical a child might have been impressed with a sense of tragedy and loss. But to Christina at this late date, for nearly two years a person of importance,

the authority of her secretary, Galdenblad, should be borne in mind in connection with her subsequent repudiation of the Lutheran faith.

the centre of observation to all around, and the object of the passionate loyalty of the nation, the part assigned to her of chief mourner was merely a tedious interruption to the pleasures and business of life. Keen-witted and shrewd, and already developing a contempt for feminine weaknesses, she was most unsuited to be the daily companion of a woman absorbed in a sorrow for Christina non-existent and whose delight was to heighten the atmosphere of the charnel-house. The small coffer containing the dead King's heart was Eleonore's cherished possession, nor was it for some time that she could be induced by the representations of clergy and Senate to permit it to rest with his body. Her sorrow found additional solace in memorial inscriptions, and in the institution of a new Order, having for its badge a heart-shaped medallion bearing on one side a coffin with the King's initials, surrounded by the words "Post mortem triumpho. Morti mea vice. Multis despectus Magnalia feci"; and on the reverse a German quatrain calling for vengeance.

Looking back upon this period Christina again saw herself, not as some children might have been, frightened, nervous, and miserable, but impatient of the trappings of grief, and wearied to the last degree by interminable sermons and orations, "more insupportable to me than the death of the King, for which I had long been consoled." Shut up at other times with Eleonore in apartments draped in black, and from which sable hangings excluded the daylight, the child chafed against the enforced confinement; and although she states that she was not devoid of affection and respect for her mother, it is no wonder that she rebelled against the Queen's desire to keep her, day and night, at her side, and availed herself eagerly of any pretext to exchange the gloom of her mother's surroundings for a more cheerful atmosphere.

In due time followed the final obsequies—on which

occasion, observes Christina with the asperity of remembered tedium, all that had been invented by the Swedish nation to honour the dead at the expense of the living was exaggerated, the Queen-mother playing her part of mourner magnificently—and at length the long-drawn-out ceremonial was brought to a conclusion, to the relief of all save Eleonore.

The Regency, watching carefully over their charge, had found it difficult to dispute the Queen-mother's claim to the society of her only child; the resistance she made to the proposal to remove Christina from her apartments being such as to render the desired arrangement almost impossible. When, however, the perplexed officers of State discussed the matter with the child herself, they found in her a willing and ready co-operator, moved no less by a genuine liking for her lessons than by a desire to escape from her mother and the company of the dwarfs and buffoons who served to distract her from her grief. So far as the good-will of the scholar was concerned, there was no fear that her hours of study would be curtailed.

With this measure of success the Senate was fain to be content. Oxenstiern was detained in Germany by the war, and, though he exhorted his colleagues to be firm in the matter of separating Christina from her mother, his injunctions were not easily carried out. But as the Princess Palatine continued, at least nominally, to retain the personal guardianship of her niece until her death in 1639, when Christina was in her thirteenth year, Marie-Eleonore's possession of her daughter cannot have been undisputed. From any interposition in public affairs she remained rigidly excluded.

A lengthy document, drawn up by the Estates of the Realm in 1635, gives expression to their anxiety as to the education and training of their Queen, and contains "the opinions and sentiments of the Estates

of Sweden upon the manner in which her Majesty, the young Queen, should be brought up." An amicable conference, it was stated, had taken place between the Regents and themselves, and, though there was no reason to believe that these Lords would neglect their duty, the Estates did not deem it superfluous to record their own recommendations. It was in their eyes of the last importance that Christina, aged nine, should regard her subjects with benevolence and affection, should accustom herself to love and esteem them, each according to his station and quality ; and should discourse well of the present condition of the country and of the Regency. She must duly respect both her guardians and the Senate, and behave graciously towards all her subjects, maintaining each one in lawful liberty.

Besides all this, the Queen, whilst learning foreign manners and customs so far as was necessary to her high position, was to be carefully taught to adhere to native usages, physical and mental. She was to be ever surrounded by those who, if she chanced to see or hear what would be mischievous, would be ready to repair the damage ; whilst her morals were to be safeguarded by the careful choice of companions of her own age, trained by their parents in irreproachable habits and sentiments. The principal object of her studies should be to fit her to govern as a Christian sovereign, and to that end she was to be, first of all, instructed in religion. Not only pernicious, but useless reading, was to be forbidden ; nor was she to be corrupted either by the errors of the Pope or of Calvin.

Had it been permitted to the Estates of Sweden to look for a moment into the future, the glance might have taught them the futility of care and precaution, however detailed and minute. A whole nation, so to speak, was bent upon keeping Christina's small feet

in the straight and narrow path from which, in almost every direction, she was destined to stray.

Meanwhile the very facts accentuating the importance of her training increased its difficulties. The position of a Queen who was an object of interest to an entire people, and a bone of contention, besides, between her lawful guardians and her mother, was not one to foster a spirit of diffidence and humility; nor could her sense of superiority with regard to Eleonore, and her indulgent contempt for her mother's weaknesses, fail to produce an attitude of independence daily gaining strength and becoming habitual. Of her remaining years of childhood, however, personal details are few; a series of letters addressed to the Prince Palatine between the ages of nine and thirteen being chiefly of interest as examples of her progress in Latin, the language usually employed. It appears to have been the wish of her present guardians, as it had been that of her father, that her correspondence should be carried on without assistance, and certain grammatical errors which point to an absence of supervision show that the child's quickness of learning, and especially her mastery over languages, has not been overrated.[1]

To 1641 a more interesting document belongs, displaying a power of dealing with a matter demanding delicate handling remarkable in a child scarcely over fourteen.

A member of the Regency having died, it had become necessary to nominate his successor, and a discussion had taken place in the Senate as to whether the choice should be left to Christina herself, with the possibility that she might select for the post her cousin, Charles Gustavus, son of the Prince Palatine. In a long German letter addressed to his father the young Queen dexterously exonerates herself from any suspicion of ill-will arising from the fact that she had

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 38-46.

declined the responsibility of naming Prince Charles, her unpalatable decision being so wrapped up in the language of prudence and courtesy that it would have been hard for father or son to find an excuse for taking offence.

The Senate, Christina explained, had inquired as to her wishes, being still in doubt as to whether to submit certain names to her for selection, or to leave her at liberty to make a free choice, adding that her nomination of Prince Charles would have met with approval. "Informed of this," proceeded Christina, "I replied that I well perceived in this their judgment, the true affection they bore me, in that they desired so near a kinsman of my own; but that I did not consider it advisable to run this risk with regard to him, and also knew that you would not permit it. As to the other matter, I resolved that it would not become me to select my guardian, should they not submit to me a list; or else to say that, could the Chancellor be spared from the Council, he would be the person most fitted for the office, in order thereby to gain his favour. Should they name more than one I would answer that, all being persons of merit, it was my opinion that the question should be decided by lot. They were pleased with this reply, and requested me to write to you on the subject. I beg you therefore to give it full consideration as regards Prince Charles and to concur in my opinion. Were I to name him the Regents would believe that I did it in order to be informed of all that went on; and in the second place they might, in order to get rid of him quickly . . . [A gap follows]. You have the best intentions in the world; but you do not reflect sufficiently."

Thus Christina most adroitly extricated herself from a difficult position, charging her refusal to admit her young cousin to the Regency on the very fact of

his near relationship and the intimacy of the terms which might render the experiment hazardous. The letter, from a girl of fourteen, was a notable performance. The Senate acted upon her suggestion, and the succession to the vacant office was decided by lot.[1]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 35-38.

CHAPTER III

1641–47

Prosecution of the war—The Queen-mother flies the kingdom—War with Denmark—Christina's majority—Parties at Court—Magnus de la Gardie—Christina in difficulties—Peace negotiations.

DURING the years following upon the death of Gustavus, the war in Germany had been vigorously prosecuted by the Swedes, under the guidance of Oxenstiern, and led by the generals trained in the great King's school.

The defeat of Nordlingen had, it is true, threatened with disaster the cause to which they were pledged, striking terror into the hearts of the Protestant Princes, and leading most of those who had been banded together in the Evangelical Union to make terms with the Emperor. Even Oxenstiern had considered the situation so grave that he was afterwards heard to say that it had cost him the second sleepless night he had passed in Germany, the first having been caused by the tidings of Gustavus's death.[1] For the Chancellor to keep vigil was so rare an occurrence that more anxious men might well lose heart and consider the case desperate.

By the help of France, however, and supported by a remnant of their old confederates, the Swedes had continued to keep up the fight, and had on the whole been rewarded by success. To follow the course

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 87.

of events in Germany is impossible here, but it is curious to note that Christina, from her school-room at Stockholm, kept her eye upon the seat of war, and formed her conclusions independently of those about her. She had been sedulously trained to take an interest in public business. On the return of Oxenstiern to Sweden, when she was no more than ten years old, she records that it was his habit to spend two or three hours with her daily, instructing her in her duties,[1] and, allowing for exaggeration, it is plain that the Chancellor was determined to teach her that art of ruling which he may, at a future date, have considered that she had mastered only too well.

With regard to the state of affairs in Germany, a couple of letters addressed in 1641 to the Prince Palatine exemplify the cool common sense with which she watched events and foresaw the dangers likely to follow from the illness and death of the Commander-in-Chief of the Swedish forces, General Baner.

At Stockholm, she observed, they cared nothing about the tidings from Germany, imagining that another leader could easily be found. But men like Baner, remarked the fifteen-year-old sage, were not shaken out of your sleeve, and should he die it would go ill yonder. A little later the great soldier had passed away, and Christina was proved right. In a second letter she informed her uncle that all the Swedish officers, including the three provisionally in command of the troops, had written to demand that a certain sum of money should be forwarded to Germany, adding that, should it be sent, they would continue to serve their country faithfully; if not, they trusted excuse would be found for them should they leave the service, and adding the request that the new Commander-in-Chief should not, like Baner, be entrusted with

[1] Arckenholtz, *Vie de Christine, écrite par elle-même*, t. iii., p. 55.

absolute power, but should share it with a Council of War.[1]

The fact that these demands were formulated, and accompanied by what bore at least the semblance of a threat of desertion, bears witness to the sagacity of Christina's prediction of trouble. The money was, however, found, the great general Torstenson given the supreme command, and the peril was averted.

Almost at the same time that Baner was withdrawn from the scene of action another, more domestic, incident occurred ; which, if it caused the Queen some natural regret, must have removed an embarrassing factor from the Court. This was the flight of the Queen-dowager.

Marie-Eleonore had already shown a disposition to absent herself from a place where her influence had never corresponded to her wishes, nor was it until after repeated entreaties, both from Christina and from the Regency, that she had repaired to Stockholm. She did not long remain there.

The first hint of an episode looked upon in Sweden as a catastrophe was conveyed by the Queen to her uncle in the same letter informing him of the condition of affairs in Germany ; when she mentioned that it was currently reported that the King of Denmark was dispatching a vessel to take her mother to Denmark. The true explanation of what followed appears to be that Eleonore, wearying, not inexcusably, of her position in being deprived, as she was, of any vestige of power in the State and reduced to a mere cipher, had determined to put an end, so far as she was concerned, to a humiliating situation and to escape to a more congenial atmosphere, leaving behind a country and a nation she had always disliked.

Regarding the matter from a rational point of view, and assuming that the tie of natural affection between

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 55-7.

herself and a daughter unlike her in every particular was not sufficiently strong to outweigh the advantages of a change of residence, the Queen-mother can scarcely be blamed for her desire for emancipation. It might also have been expected that she had only to notify her wishes to the authorities at Stockholm in order to be promptly provided with the means of carrying them into effect. But, to an essentially respectable and law-abiding people, the separation of mother and daughter may have worn the appearance of a scandal to be averted at all costs ; whilst Eleonore was possibly one of the women who delight in investing their movements with a flavour of romance, and to whom a clandestine elopement presents more attractions than a soberly conducted journey. At any rate, the Queen's preparations for departure were made with as much mystery and precaution as if the whole of Sweden were banded together to prevent it. Under the pretext of passing certain days in fasting, she shut herself up, with a single lady-in-waiting, in an apartment opening directly upon the castle gardens, and, informed of the arrival of the Danish vessel chartered to convey her away, slipped out from her chamber under the cover of darkness, passed through the garden, crossed the lake lying below it, and drove as rapidly as horses could take her to Nyköping, where she took ship for Denmark.

Different motives have been assigned for this escapade on the part of a woman well past middle age. It has been said that the King of Denmark, in facilitating the wishes of the Queen-mother, nourished hopes of furthering his design of obtaining Christina's hand for his son. If this was the case it argues a singular ignorance as to the amount of influence that, from a distance, Eleonore might be expected to exercise in the matter of the disposal of her daughter. The Jesuit, Bougeant, indulged quite another theory, founded upon a dispatch he quotes from the Comte d'Avaux, French

plenipotentiary in Germany, bearing a curious resemblance to an extract from some publication of the present day.

"A King and Queen of the North," wrote the Count, "separated by an arm of the sea serving as boundary to their kingdoms, conceived a desire for a nearer approach. . . . The good intelligence between them was inaugurated by secret embassies, entrusted to the dexterity of a clever woman whose action was more effectual than all our ambassadors. A gentleman belonging to one of the two Courts also took part in this little treaty, which was precluded from success during fifteen months by the jealousy of two nations. But who can resist two wills so well united and sustained by the sovereign power? One fine morning, before day had dawned, the fair Princess, attended only by a lady and a cavalier, mounts her horse; through unexplored woods and rocks reaches the sea-shore, and, with more courage than Leander, crosses the straits in a wretched little shallop."

The boat thus described was only a temporary refuge. Eleonore was carried by it to the ship where the Admiral was ready to receive, with all magnificence, his royal guest; and "in this fashion," adds the Comte d'Avaux, abruptly abandoning the thin veil of mystery in which the personality of his heroine had been hitherto enveloped, "the Queen, widow of Gustavus, was conducted to a Danish island, where Christian IV. —who may now be said to reign happily—repaired to receive her."[1]

In a letter to the Comtesse de la Suze Christina makes her comments, with indulgent superiority, upon her mother's flight: "The brilliant follies that d'Avaux has written on the subject," she told her correspondent, "will make you laugh at least as much as I have done. It must be admitted there is some truth in his

[1] P. Bougeant, quoted by Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 60.

From the original painting.

MARIE-ELEONORE, QUEEN OF SWEDEN.

p. 30]

letter; . . . but I will refrain from speaking to you of it at present, and will still less do anything myself during my life resembling this tender pilgrimage.[1]"

The letter, if genuine, was written when Christina had had time to recover from an event in any case startling, and which appears to have been somewhat of a shock. When the fact of her mother's flight was still new, she wrote, almost in the tone of a forsaken child, begging her uncle to come to her and giving, as one of her reasons for desiring his presence, the very vexatious tidings she had received that "Frau Mutter" had departed, no one knew whither, accompanied only by one lady and two gentlemen-in-waiting; whereat Christina and the Government were so much perplexed that they knew not what to do.[2]

Whatever might be the true explanation of Eleonore's flight it was an indisputable fact. A more surprising one was that the Regency, far from accepting it with resignation, were so deeply offended by the Queen-mother's conduct that the war shortly following between Sweden and Denmark has been ascribed to the sentiments aroused by the occurrence. The Danes, for their part, finding that Eleonore's action was regarded as an insult to the memory of the late King, to Christina, and to the Swedish nation, thought it well to disclaim responsibility in the matter; and it was accordingly stated that the share in it taken by Christian IV. had been the result of an appeal which it would have been difficult to refuse. What alternative, asks a Danish writer, remained to the King, solicited for assistance by a Queen in distress, who had declared to his representative that, having formerly been the

[1] Lacombe, *Lettres secrètes de la Reine Christine*, p. 14. No indication being supplied of the sources from which these letters are drawn, their authenticity must be chiefly determined by internal evidence. In some cases they are either manifestly misdated, or conflict with other evidence.

[2] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 206.

defence and refuge of all the world, she was now reduced to exist by the favour of others?

It might have been the wiser course had Sweden accepted an explanation based upon chivalric obligations. Not only, with one war in Germany still on hand, was a second unadvisable; but when, in 1643, it was declared, France, attributing the step to the pride engendered by success and considering the pretexts for it flimsy and insufficient, was disposed to resent the conduct of her ally. Nor was it long before a pacification was sought.

The absence of her mother can have made little practical difference to Christina. Already looking upon herself as head of her family, she was acting in that capacity, was taking thought for its younger members, and was urging, at seventeen, the Prince Palatine to give his younger son, Adolphus, the *gouverneur* of whom, in Christina's opinion, he stood greatly in need. Supplying her uncle, after consultation with her own tutor, with the names of two candidates for the office, who, being neither too young nor too old, would keep an eye upon the lad, "for he must not be lost sight of, nor suffered to follow his inclinations," she observed that a different person would be suggested by his brother, Prince Charles, but one, in her judgment, unfit for the charge.[1] It does not appear whether or not the Prince Palatine deferred to the counsels of his youthful monitress.

In December 1644 Christina had attained her majority and had assumed the reins of government. The letters addressed by her to Oxenstiern, who was conducting the peace negotiations with Denmark, were those of a reigning sovereign, conscious of the weight of her opinions, and feeling, if with limitations, responsible for the kingdom's welfare. The Chancellor and she were at this time agreed as to the

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv.

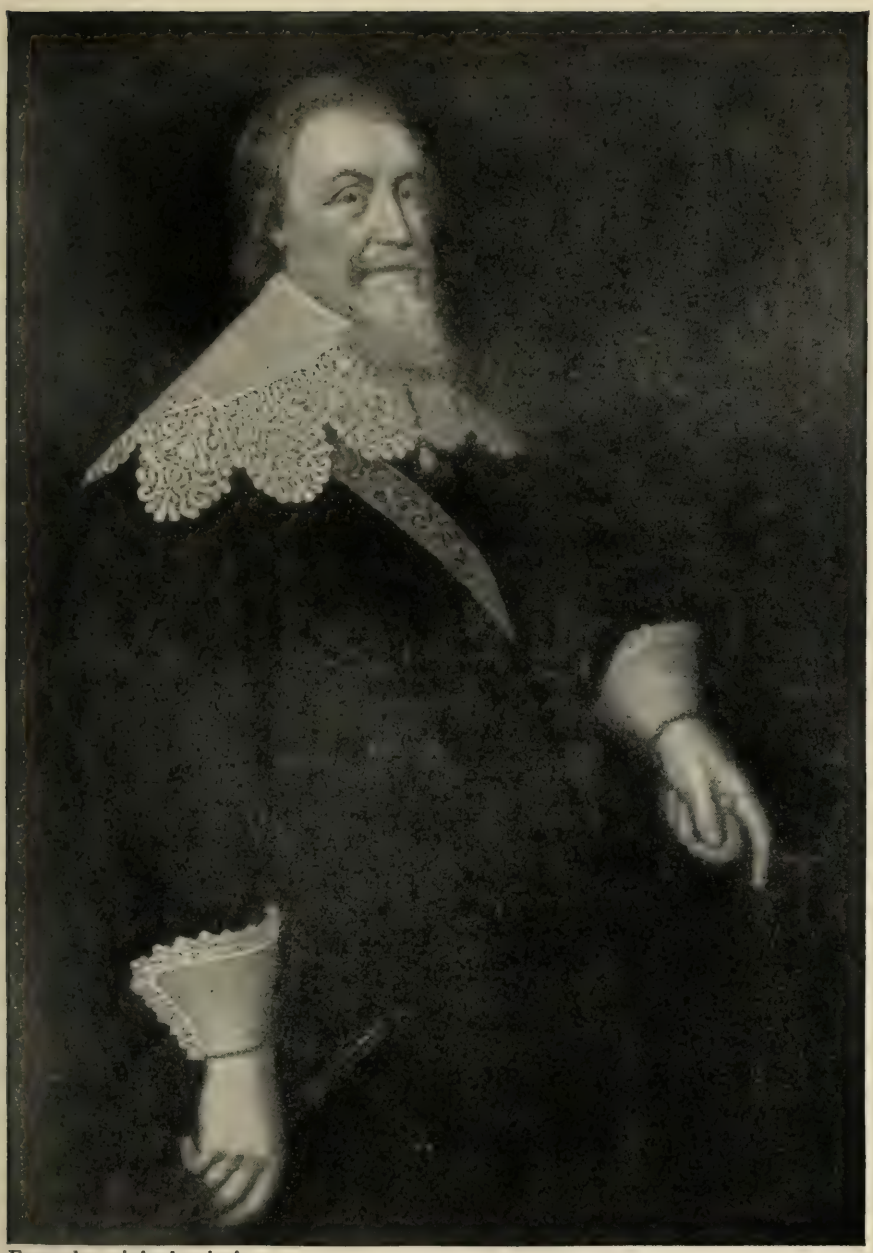
questions at issue. For peace with honour she expressed her desire; but open warfare was to be preferred to an ill-assured peace. She recognised, nevertheless, the fact that the majority of the Senate would be ready to accept terms other than those deemed necessary by herself and her minister, if only thus could an end be put to the war. For this reason she indicated certain points it might be well to yield. Measuring with shrewd sagacity the difficulties of the situation, Christina observed that, should things go wrong, it would be said that the game had been begun by restless heads and continued through her personal ambition. "Further, my innocent youth would give rise to the calumny that I am incapable of taking good advice, and that, carried away by a desire to rule, I have been in fault. I foresee that it will be my fate that the credit of what I do with care, and after mature consideration, will be given to others; but that if anything that should have been attended to by them is neglected the blame of it will be laid upon me." In Oxenstiern, however, her confidence was entire, and she left the issue of the present negotiations in his hands and in God's.

By November 1645 the Chancellor's efforts had been crowned with success, and, raising him to the rank of Count, Christina, before the assembled Senate, made an oration in his honour, recapitulating the services he had rendered to her father and herself, and to their common country, and paying a well-deserved tribute to his gifts and his virtues. It was not long before she modified the high opinion then expressed of a man who had no doubt become accustomed, during a prolonged minority, to dominate the councils of the realm, and who came, not unnaturally, to be viewed by her in the light of a pedagogue, an obstacle to the exercise of paramount authority on her own part.

At twenty years of age, Christina was an object

of interest to all Europe. The brilliant career of Gustavus Adolphus, and the prominent part taken by Sweden, both during his life-time and after his death, in the great struggle that was going forward, had served to fix attention upon a daughter who had been, since babyhood, before the public eye. Accounts had gone abroad of her precocious learning ; her unusual gifts were exaggerated by report ; whilst the intention she was manifesting of vindicating her right to govern, not only in name but in fact, invested her with additional importance. Whilst she had remained a cipher the part played by Sweden in European politics had been comparatively simple. Oxenstiern, the Regency, and the Senate, were powers whose probable course of action it was possible to forecast ; but when the element of a woman's ambition, a woman's preferences, and a woman's caprice was introduced the tangled skein became more difficult to unravel. The Court had separated, as a matter of course, into rival camps, the one occupied by courtiers who concurred in the Queen's views—or who found it their wisdom to appear to do so—the other comprising those who maintained more regular authority. Led by the Chancellor, Marshal Horn, and General Wrangel, and backed by the Senate, this second party was opposed to that headed by the Queen, which numbered amongst its members her uncle and his son, the Constable de la Gardie, and Marshal Torstenson.

If the war with Denmark was concluded, that in Germany was still proceeding ; and to the Queen's desire for leisure to establish her right to absolute authority at home her ardent and growing wish to make peace abroad was ascribed by Chanut, at first French resident and afterwards ambassador at Stockholm, a man destined to exercise no little influence over Christina during the coming years. On the



From the original painting.

AXEL OXENSTIERN, CHANCELLOR.

p. 34]

question of war or peace she and Oxenstiern had ceased to be in accord, the statesman who had borne the burden and heat of the day being naturally more exigent in his demands than his mistress.

When Queen and Chancellor, the two powers at Court, were in disagreement, it was not easy for others to steer their course discreetly, and Chanut in particular found that he had a difficult part to play between the necessity of convincing Oxenstiern that it was to him that he looked for the determination of business questions, and of persuading Christina of his confidence in her own capacity for dealing with them, and of his full submission to her authority.[1] To a man of whom Christina's successor was accustomed to say that he gave the lie to his position, and was too upright to be a good courtier,[2] the duty of conciliating both parties was no light one, but Chanut appears to have been successful so far as the Queen was concerned. His task was probably rendered the easier by the marked liking she displayed at this period for everything French.

It is possible that this preference was partly responsible for one of the chief causes of disunion at Court, namely, the extraordinary favour she showed to the son of the Constable, young Count Magnus de la Gardie. Of French extraction, and doubtless contrasting favourably in her eyes with the rougher Swedes by whom she was surrounded, the young man had succeeded in commending himself to the Queen to a degree rousing the indignation and jealousy of the party attached to Oxenstiern, by which the de la Gardies, as well as the Princes Palatine, were regarded as foreigners. Christina was not left in ignorance of the sentiments of the Chancellor's friends ; but though Peter Brahe, a prominent Senator, took her bluntly to

[1] *Mémoires de Chanut*, ed. Vauciennes, t. i., p 20.
[2] *Ibid.*, Preface.

task, complaining that her whole confidence was bestowed upon a young gentleman and a priest—her former tutor, Matthiæ—she was in no wise inclined to defer to the remonstrances of age and experience; and when an ambassador was to be sent to Paris, Count Magnus, to the rage and consternation of the faction opposed to him, was selected for the post. It may be that Christina had been guided in her choice by something besides the personal predilection to which it was attributed, for the future career of the Count, and the position he filled at a time when her liking had turned to hate, afford ample proof of his ability. It was, at all events, useless to attempt to move her from her purpose. Though a quarrel between Queen and Chancellor was the result, the young envoy was sent to Paris, and Chanut wrote home that the King could do nothing that would afford Christina more gratification than to heap favours upon him.[1]

The impression created by de la Gardie at the French Court was good. He was, wrote Madame de Motteville, handsome, carried himself well "et ressemblait à un favori"[2]—a species familiar to most of the Courts of Europe. The fashion in which he spoke of his mistress—alike with passion and respect—suggested a vein of romance appertaining to the relationship of the two; and it was currently reported that, had Christina been in a position to follow her inclinations, they would have led her to bestow herself upon the young ambassador. According to Count Magnus she had no need of a minister, since, her youth notwithstanding, she kept the reins of government in her own hands, devoting herself, besides the hours given to study, to business affairs. She was guided by her brain; nor had she the beauty or the tastes of a woman. Instead of making men die of

[1] Chanut, t. i., p. 29.
[2] Madame de Motteville, *Mémoires*.

love, she made them die of shame and anger. At this date, continues Madame de Motteville, Christina was credited with all the heroic virtues. Later, the world grew wiser, and appraised her at a different and, it may be, truer rate.

Count Magnus's description, in spite of Madame de Motteville's assertion, does not read like that of a lover, and the fact that his subsequent marriage to the Queen's cousin, the Prince Palatine's daughter, is said to have been happy, militates against the tendency to regard him in that light. In connection with the question which arises as to Christina's relations with the men she singled out for favour, it may be well to quote the verdict of the Baron de Bildt, whose access to documents dealing with the Queen's history has afforded him exceptional opportunities of forming a judgment. "Courts," he admits, "are Courts; for, after all, sovereigns are human, and have a right to their preferences. Christina certainly had them; possibly she did not choose them well. She may be blamed for the largesses bestowed upon her *protégés*, for their rapid and often unmerited advancement, and for other things; but it would be eminently unjust to make of them her lovers. Documents record many reports on the subject, but no facts; and gossip, after two centuries, does not constitute history."[1]

The statement of the man who, in modern times, has made the most careful and able study of Christina, even if it be not taken as conclusive, should be allowed due weight in forming a judgment upon the many problems of this kind presented by her career. It is therefore given at the outset. In de la Gardie's case it cannot be denied that the favours showered upon him were amply sufficient to lend colour to scandal. Not content with creating him General, senator, ambassador, and Grand Marshal, she accompanied rank

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, p. 17.

and office with hard cash. A letter to the Court Chancellor, Salvius, shows that she had authorised Count Magnus—of whose fidelity she assured Salvius in a second letter she was more certain than of anything else in the world[1]—to borrow a hundred thousand crowns in Paris, and that she was forced to take steps to defend her envoy from calumnies to which the transaction had given rise. For whatever purpose the money had been raised, it was freely asserted that, in proper hands, it might have served to arrest the progress of the enemy in the field; and that it had passed into the possession, not of the Field-Marshal but of the Queen's favourite, was sufficiently damaging to Christina herself to cause her no small degree of perturbation. The measures she took to allay popular discontent were singular, and she is presently found entreating Salvius to save her from the consequences of her indiscretion by borrowing, upon his private credit, a corresponding sum to be applied to the needs of the army, adding promises of future favour and preferment should he thus come to her assistance.[2] The ill and its remedy are alike evidence of the snares and pitfalls surrounding a Queen of twenty—snares which she must be more, or less, than a woman wholly to escape.

Salvius, to whom Christina had trusted to extricate her from her present difficulties, was the colleague of the younger Oxenstiern at the congress charged with the protracted peace negotiations. Whilst Oxenstiern represented his father's views, Salvius was the exponent of those of Christina and of the faction more eager for peace than exacting as to terms of accommodation. In the Chancellor's son the Queen saw an obstacle to the speedy realisation of her desires, and, impatient of contradiction, she was not disposed to keep silence as to her discontent. A letter of April 1647, ostensibly addressed to the two plenipotentiaries but in fact aimed

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 91, 92. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i., p. 96.

at Oxenstiern alone, contained her orders that the negotiations should be brought to a satisfactory conclusion without further delay. "If matters go otherwise it will be for you to see how you will answer it to God, to the Estates of the Realm, and to me. . . . You can count upon it that neither authority nor the support of great families will then prevent me from testifying to all the world the displeasure caused me by a mode of procedure destitute of reason."

In a private letter to Salvius she explained that her diatribe had been directed solely at his colleague, and that she would prove to the entire universe that Oxenstiern *père* was not capable of shaking the world with his finger-tip, adding a postscript to request that her correspondent will let her know of the grimaces made by the Chancellor's son on perusing her missive. If Christina was quickly to tire of reigning she was determined, so long as she wore the crown, to vindicate her authority.

The post of the Queen's confidential servant, occupied at the moment by Salvius, was no easy one. It was her private views on peace and war that he was charged to press upon the congress at Osnaburg ; whilst an injunction added to her instructions on graver matters, to the effect that the interests of Count Magnus were to be treated as her own, may have added a fresh complication to the performance of his duties. That they were executed to Christina's satisfaction is clear, nor did Salvius go unrewarded. In the teeth of the opposition offered by the Oxenstierns, the subservient Court Chancellor—a self-made man—was raised to the rank of senator, the Queen, in her speech on the occasion, explaining her views of the comparative claims of birth and ability. When good advice and sound counsel were in question, she told the Senate, it was not sixteen quarterings that were demanded. Had Salvius belonged to a great family, he would

doubtless have been a capable man ; he might reckon it to his advantage that lack of birth alone could be laid to his charge. It was of importance to her to possess able servants. Should those who were well born show ability, they, like others, would make their fortune ; but advancement should not be limited to a few families or persons.[1]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 135.

CHAPTER IV

1647–51

Chanut's description of Christina—Projects of marriage—Prince Charles Gustavus—Christina proposes him as her successor—Scene in the Senate—Her success.

IT was inevitable that Christina's youth should be productive of complications, and that so long as she remained unwedded the future should wear an uncertain aspect. The question of her marriage was of the first importance, not to Sweden alone but to Europe at large. A king consort who, connected with any of the powerful reigning houses, brought a large accession of strength to his wife's country would have been a menace to his neighbours; the influence of a husband pledged to any particular policy or party, domestic or foreign, would be a factor to be taken into account; whilst in Sweden, and more especially at Court, the unwise favour shown to Magnus de la Gardie may have served as an object-lesson as to the danger of undivided authority residing in the hands of a Queen of twenty-one, and have quickened the desire of her subjects to see her safe-guarded by marriage from some at least of the perils of her position. So far, however, it was impossible to form more than a conjecture as to the man upon whom her choice was likely to fall.

If her head had been turned it was no wonder. Disposed by nature, as well as by training, to entertain an inordinate conception of her position and person,

she could not be ignorant that she was playing not only to the select audience represented by her Court or country, but to Europe at large; and the consciousness can scarcely have failed to affect the performance. A detailed description sent home by Chanut supplies a picture of her at the age of twenty-one. Requested by Anne of Austria and the young King Louis to obtain for them a portrait of the Queen, the envoy supplemented it by an account of her habits and customs, her manners and way of life, which presents a picture drawn by a close and careful observer who enjoyed frequent opportunities of noting what he described. It is true that the attitude in which he paints her may have been a pose; but even so, it was probably, like many such, unconsciously artificial, and Christina, in acting a part, may have mistaken it for reality. At this distance of time it is difficult to determine the question. It must also be remembered that a pose has an increasing tendency to become second nature; so that a return to simplicity might, by a paradox, almost assume the character of a pose. In Christina's case, having formed an ideal of what the Queen of Sweden ought to be, she may honestly have believed herself to have attained it; and if there were deception she may have been included in the fraud.

However that may be, the description of the French envoy renders it possible to catch a glimpse of the girl as she appeared to her motley Court, made up of nobles of ancient houses, senators, and statesmen; men she had raised from obscurity; foreign adventurers, scientists, and philosophers. It was the Court of a woman, it must be added, who was never fortunate in her choice of servants.

With regard to her outward appearance, the writer confessed to a difficulty in portraying a countenance liable to sudden changes, according to the movements

of her mind, ordinarily pensive, but clouding dangerously when she felt disapproval of what was said. In conversation she would treat at times, in the language of the Stoics, of virtue and its pre-eminence ; whilst in familiar talk she spoke of the true value of things, trampling her crown under foot and acknowledging virtue to be the sole good. Yet it was not for long together that she forgot she was a Queen ; and she would presently take up her crown once more, recognising its weight, and admitting that a good practice of her own profession of royalty was the initial step in the path of virtue. Nature, in Chanut's opinion, had equipped her well for her part. Her facility in the comprehension of public affairs was remarkable ; her memory so good that she was tempted to abuse it. She spoke Latin, French, German, Flemish, and Swedish, and was learning Greek. In her hours of leisure she loved to talk with those acquainted with the curious facts of science ; and her mind, eager in the pursuit of knowledge, sought information on every subject ; though, far from making a parade of her learning, she sought rather to avoid the appearance of it. She took especial pleasure in hearing problems discussed by persons of differing opinions, reserving her judgment upon them until the last, when she would briefly express it, as a *quasi* determination of the question at issue.

The envoy further noted, with astonishment, the power she wielded, notwithstanding her youth, at the Council board, and the grace, kindness, and persuasive power she displayed. There were some who attributed the submissiveness of her senators to the deference paid to her womanhood. This was not Chanut's opinion ; a king, he thought, with her qualities, would have wielded a like authority. But he confessed that it would have been less surprising than to see a girl sway the minds of councillors, old and wise, at her pleasure.

She rarely conversed with the ladies of her Court, business, together with the outdoor pursuits she loved, leaving little leisure for such intercourse ; and even on formal occasions it was observed that she showed a preference for the conversation of men. The time she could spare from business was chiefly devoted to study. A quarter of an hour was the most she spent on her toilet, and, save on functions of State, a comb and a ribbon sufficed to dress her hair.[1]

Christina, as here described, was not a woman to bestow her hand blindly or at the bidding of politicians. That she was still unmarried was not from lack of suitors. Gustavus Adolphus was scarcely dead before the Princes of Denmark had been put forward as aspirants to the hand of his daughter, the Queen-mother being supposed to favour the pretensions of the younger brother. Her views were not shared by Oxenstiern, who wrote from Germany to beg the Senate to guard the child's mind from the infusion of any such ideas. Eleonore, he added, had little or nothing to do with the disposal of the Queen. The interests of the kingdom were centred in Christina's person, whilst that of her mother was of the smallest account. The Senate and the Estates would never consent to a Danish marriage.[2]

The Danish Princes disposed of, other suitors followed in due course. Christina's cousin, the Elector of Brandenburg, was of the number, and the possibility of a match with the Kings of Spain, Portugal, Hungary, and the Romans was at least discussed. There was, in fact, scarcely a marriageable prince in Europe who was not suggested as eligible. Each and all had a serious rival in Christina's cousin, Charles Gustavus. Stealing a march upon competitors at a distance, he had grown up with the Queen, he and his sisters having

[1] *Mémoires de Chanut*, t. i., pp. 240-48.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 160.

been the playmates and companions of her childhood ; and the sequel was to prove that the Elector Palatine had acted wisely when, in spite of the rebuff administered by the Senate, he had decided upon giving his children a Swedish education. His eldest son was a young man of few personal attractions, but at seventeen even a Queen is not disposed to be over-critical of a lover, and at that age it seemed not unlikely that she would marry her cousin. The period that had since elapsed had worked a change in her sentiments ; she was unwedded and increasingly uncertain of her wishes on the subject. The only lover she could have favoured, she wrote to Chanut in an undated letter, would have been Charles Gustavus, since he was brave and generous. But she had contracted an antipathy to marriage : " I was a child when I promised my cousin to wed him. Now I am *grande fille*, and I will sign no engagement of the heart. I should break it too soon. I would rather give him my crown than marry him." [1]

The alternative must have been understood, if not used, as a mere figure of speech at the time the letter was written, nor had abdication yet taken shape as a serious possibility. In the meantime, three years after her entanglement—if it could be called so—with Charles Gustavus, had followed the interlude dominated by young de la Gardie. His father had indeed been credited with cherishing a hope that his son might obtain the Queen's hand ; and though the suspicion that Christina intended Count Magnus to share her throne was effectually dispelled by his union with the daughter of the Prince Palatine, her liking for him showed no sign of diminution and may have disinclined her for the time to entertain the idea of marriage with any other man.

Those around her could not hope to escape, so long

[1] *Lettres secrètes*, ed. Lacombe, pp. 21, 22.

as she was young and unwedded, the imputation of nourishing ambitious aspirations; and Oxenstiern himself, like his rival, was charged in some quarters with a desire to marry her to his son. The Queen, the Chancellor wrote to the young man, had broached the subject to him in the course of conversation, observing that the best way to put an end to the report would be for young Oxenstiern to marry, a view in which his father concurred. Fantasies of the kind, he said, deserved nothing but ridicule; but malice had made use of the pretext to blacken the family reputation, and the choice of a good wife would put an end to the gossip.

Charles Gustavus was in truth the only serious candidate in the field, and a conversation drawn from his memoirs throws some light upon the relations of the cousins when, in 1647, the Prince was leaving Sweden to take command of the forces in Germany.[1]

Into the period that had elapsed since Christina had imagined herself in love with her playmate, much experience had been crowded, and her views of life and marriage had undergone sensible modification. She had also become acquainted with possibilities represented by Count Magnus de la Gardie. When, therefore, in the presence of the latter, as well as of her tutor Matthiæ—surely the opportunity was ill-chosen—her cousin pressed for a definite understanding, Christina plainly refused to regard herself as in any way bound by what she had said as a child, annulling any engagement then entered into as formed by one not of an age to be pledged by any promise whatever. Having thus cleared the way by the assertion of her freedom, she explained that her mind was not yet made up, but that her decision would be taken at her coronation, when she would have reached the age of twenty-five. She further

[1] Puffendorf, quoted by Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 65.

added the important and rash declaration that if she did not then wed Charles Gustavus she would take no other husband, and would do what in her lay to cause him to be pronounced her successor. She kept her word.

Upon this imprudent compromise followed what the reader may be pardoned for regarding as a display of dramatic talent. In the manner of a stage hero, the Prince protested grandiloquently that, should his cousin refuse him as a husband, he, for his part, would not accept her other offers and would leave Sweden for ever.

"Christina," adds her biographer, "reproached him with indulging romantic fancies; and as the Prince continued to make the same affirmations, she attempted to close his lips by words little less romantic than his own, telling him that, should he happen to die before the date she had appointed, it would ever redound greatly to his honour that he had been esteemed worthy to wed a Queen such as herself, and that many men would have considered themselves very happy if only they had been adjudged worthy of that honour."

Whatever might have been the case with other men, the Prince showed no disposition to content himself with so barren a distinction; nor did Christina regard the question as closed, since her cousin was permitted to correspond on the subject with Matthiæ as well as with his father, his letters displaying the same spirit of chivalrous self-abnegation as at his parting interview and expressly urging that the Queen should be reminded of him. Unless she should decide in his favour he could not, he said, return with honour to Sweden, and begged that, so soon as peace was made, he might be given employment abroad. Should she not arrive at a definite determination it would be best, he observed later on, that he should pass his

days on the coast of the Baltic, and live there in tranquillity and as it were in retreat.[1]

Whilst Charles Gustavus was making professions of disinterested devotion, the Estates of the Realm were urging marriage upon the Queen. The answers she returned were evasive. Thanking them for their affection, she stated that, though feeling no present inclination to take a husband, she might nevertheless consent to accede to their wishes for the good of the kingdom and the pleasuring of her subjects, and further inquired whether, in choosing her cousin, she would meet with their approval. She was quickly reassured on this point; but any hopes Prince Charles might have built upon the chances of her yielding to the instances of the representatives of the people were doomed to disappointment; and she continued to maintain her attitude, free from any pledge.

It appears clear that, from whatever cause, her distaste for matrimony was growing. In part due to a preference for untrammelled liberty, it is not unlikely that, as some averred, it was also the result of a prejudice instilled into her mind by Magnus de la Gardie; since, in after-days, and when the latter had fallen from the pinnacle on which she had placed him, she warned her cousin that his brother-in-law was unworthy of his affection and pity, by reason of the ill services he had rendered him. If she had not wedded the Prince, de la Gardie was the cause, having not only dissuaded her from the match but inspired her with an aversion to Charles.[2] The hopes of the nation were at all events doomed to disappointment. Christina's antipathy to marriage, far from diminishing, only deepened with time; and in the year when her final decision was to be taken she is quoted by Chanut as declaring that she would choose death rather than a husband.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 165, 166. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i, p. 167.

In the meantime the Peace of Westphalia, concluded in October 1648, had ended the Thirty Years War, leaving the Powers who had taken part in it at liberty to turn their attention to domestic concerns. To Sweden the net result of the peace was five million crowns, the cession of the secularised Archbishopric of Bremen and Bishopric of Verdun, and the possession of Upper Pomerania, Stettin, the island of Rügen and the city of Wismar, to be held as fiefs of the Empire. The successes of Christina's reign were crowned.

A few months later, in February 1649, she had taken the definite step of communicating to the Senate her repugnance to marriage; and, in consideration of the importance of a speedy settlement in the event of her dying childless, had pressed them to declare her cousin, Prince Charles, her successor.[1]

The proposal was unexpected, and, taken by surprise, her hearers at first remained mute. The silence was presently broken by voices raised in protest, expostulation, and negation. The Senate was not disposed to do the Queen's bidding. Christina, however, unused to opposition, turned fiercely upon the dissentients. With a spirit reminiscent of Elizabeth Tudor, she told the members present that she was well aware that there were those among them who, regarding her as the last of her house, were counting upon their personal share in the election to follow upon her death. To them she had to say that not one of their house was to be preferred to Prince Charles. Others desired a change in the form of government, considering their interests before the welfare of the State. Had such a change been desirable she would herself have taken measures to provide for it after her death, but, considering the habits of the nation, and regarding the destruction

[1] Puffendorf, quoted by Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 171 *seq.*

of the monarchy as an injustice, she desired to obviate the misfortunes incident to an election.

The scene, as it proceeded, was characteristic both of Christina and of the fashion of free speech prevailing in the Senate. Constable Torstenson, belonging to her own party at Court and one of the most loyal of her subjects, told his mistress plainly that only for her sake was any respect paid to Prince Charles. To turn themselves into slaves required overmuch reflection, though he had never contemplated introducing the republican form of government into Sweden.

After a digression dealing with the present condition of France and England, Christina returned to the point under discussion. Were she to die, she said, she wagered her two ears that her cousin would never come to the throne. Let him, therefore, be declared her successor; and when Torstenson expressed his belief that, should the Prince be denied her hand, he would remain unmarried, she replied by a frank expression of incredulity. Love, she said, was not kindled for one woman only, and a crown was a fair maiden. She had told Charles that in him, no more than a little Prince, it was great daring to aspire to wed a Queen. After which, condescending to meet the arguments that had been advanced, she admitted that she was entirely in accord with the Senate in believing that Charles had no right to the throne. Nevertheless she begged that, by favour and grace, and for the good and security of the realm, he might be recognised as her successor.

Some days later the question was referred to a Committee of the Estates, called into Council with the Senate. Again the Queen in person expounded her views and wishes. Again a hot argument ensued, Christina protesting that not a word should be extracted from her on the subject of marriage until her will

had been executed. When Bishop Matthiæ urged that she was bound by the decrees of the realm to marry, she replied by an indignant protest. No one in the world, she declared, could compel her, should she not herself determine upon the step. She might do so—she did not deny it. To wed for the good of the realm was a great motive. But were she able to safeguard its interest by other means she would have done all that could be demanded of her. What she had promised the Prince she would religiously perform, "but you are not at this time to know what it is that I have promised him." To the assertion of Matthiæ that the report that she had announced her intention of conferring her hand on her cousin was current in Europe, and to his question what would be said by the world of her present conduct, she replied negligently that when it had been talked of enough another subject of conversation would be found.

The Queen was determined, the Senate and the Estates were not; in the end Christina carried her point, and the deed making Charles Gustavus heir to the crown of Sweden was signed; though Oxenstiern, affixing his signature to the document, did so with sorrow and anger. If, he told the official sent to him with it, his grave were open before him and he was to choose between it and the endorsement of this Act of Succession, he would prefer to enter his grave.[1] So long, however, as Christina had her way she probably cared little for disapproval or blame, and her success is a singular proof of the ascendancy she exercised over older and wiser heads.

Thus the first step towards abdication was taken. Christina dead, or otherwise removed, the future of Sweden, so far as she could compass it, was assured. But she conferred the crown on her cousin as a subject

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 195.

who had no claim to it. The Prince, it was stated in a contemporary memoir, accepted, under certain conditions, the honour offered him. "That is false and ridiculous," the Queen noted on the margin. "Could he fail to accept on his knees so great good fortune, so little merited and less hoped for? For not without losing his senses could he have hoped for it." [1]

Wisely or not, the thing was done. At the Coronation, when it took place, Prince Charles, now returned from Germany, occupied his place as recognised heir to the throne. Christina had triumphed over Chancellor and Senate.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 162.

CHAPTER V

1649–51

Christina mediates in France—The Prince de Condé—Condition of Sweden and popular discontent—Project of abdication first takes shape—Christina consents to abandon it—Letters on religion.

IF the affairs of Sweden were for the present in a condition of tranquillity, her old ally, France, was torn by internal dissension; and Christina, whose interests were never bounded by limits of geography and nationality, was following the course of events with eagerness, and attempting, with the rash optimism of youth, to bring about the re-establishment of peaceful relations between the young King Louis and his rebellious subjects. That the leader of those rebellious subjects had been already singled out by her for admiration was an additional incentive to exertion. To her at this time the unseen Condé—the rather, judging by the future, because unseen—was the hero of the age. When dispatching de la Gardie to Paris she had entrusted him with a letter to be delivered on the way to the man who, as Duc d'Enghien, had just avenged, in the second battle of Nordlingen, the Swedish defeat on that same battle-field. Young, and in the first brilliancy of his military career, he was a champion well calculated to appeal to Christina's imagination, and, adopting him as her hero, she sent him an autograph letter of congratulation.[1]

"I assure you," she wrote, "that my own successes

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 66.

have never touched me more nearly than your victories. If you had done no more than avenge with so much valour the manes of my soldiers at Nordlingen, it would necessarily give rise in me to special appreciation of your glory. I shall hope, Monsieur, that your great exploits in Germany may continue; and my interests cause me to desire that you may cross the Rhine once more, thereby to complete the disheartening of our enemies."

Enghien was not to be outdone in courtesy, and in his reply he paid a just tribute to the great soldier who had preceded him. Christina's generosity, he said, turned commonplace actions into famous victories and the price attached to them by her alone gave them their value. The conquests of her father had made him hope for more famous successes. But Gustavus having been born to be matchless, it was not astonishing that what he had achieved could not be repeated. "I am content to have avenged at Nordlingen an insult offered by fortune after his death to his arms which she would not have ventured to offer him living. I confess, Madame, that in repairing it, I fought in the interests of his glory and of yours, so that your enemies, so often vanquished by him, should not be able to boast of a conquest over you."

Times were now changed; the hero was discredited at home; and though Louis, representing sovereignty outraged and defied, might appeal to the Queen, the sympathies of the woman were enlisted on the side of the man whom she regarded in some sort as her personal champion.

Nor had Condé been backward in claiming her support. From his prison at Vincennes he wrote to beg her to expostulate with the Queen Regent and Mazarin on the misuse of their authority. The appeal chimed in well with Christina's inclinations. To intervene as mediatrix in the affairs of one of the

great Powers of Europe was a duty commending itself strongly to her love of importance and to the estimate of her personal power and influence indicated by her words at a later date, when she wrote that " since her majority she had rendered herself the absolute arbiter not only of her own kingdom, but of all Europe, whose destinies appeared to depend upon her will alone."[1] Wearying, in her corner of the world, of the routine of kingship ; perhaps secretly conscious, in spite of the place her father had won for Sweden among the nations, of a certain provincialism in her surroundings, she longed to make her influence felt in a wider sphere, and lost no time in responding to Condé's appeal. The number of letters addressed by her, at different stages of the struggle, to its various participants, testify to her zeal and activity. The Queen-mother, the young King Philip of Spain, the Parlement of Paris, Cardinal de Retz, the duc d'Orléans, the duc de Longueville, Mademoiselle de Montpensier and Condé himself, were all in turn recipients of missives urging the duty of composing their differences and restoring peace to their distracted country.

No doubt France would have been the gainer had they acted upon her counsels. But Christina could not have expected that a foreign sovereign would be permitted to play the part she was so anxious to perform ; nor were her admonitions such as to be viewed with approval by the authorities. To Orléans she explicitly expressed her sympathy with that desire of effecting the removal of Mazarin which had been a chief motive of the quarrel ; adding—for once conscious of a merit in Protestantism—that if her religion had no other advantage than securing exemption from the ambition and unruliness of churchmen, it was a consolation to see nations left in tranquillity without

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, p. 15, note.

cardinals or bishops. To Condé—in her eyes the central figure of the drama, a hero in disgrace, rewarded by ingratitude for his splendid services—she wrote in terms displaying her skill in the use of flattery. "I will hope," she said, congratulating him upon his release, "with all my heart that your virtue, triumphing over itself in the midst of misfortune, may achieve what remains to be accomplished for the tranquillity of France, and that that virtue may henceforth be more than ever the terror of foes and the support of a State of which you are the glory and the delight"—with more of the same sort, addressed to "the most illustrious prince in the world."[1]

Condé was not likely to be silent concerning the impassioned partisanship of the northern Queen, and since it was not as an element of peace and tranquillity that he was regarded at the moment in France, her attitude may have served to accentuate the irritation already caused by her interference. The authorities lost no time in making their sentiments on the subject plain; and, inspired by Mazarin, the Council of State, whilst thanking the Queen of Sweden for her good-will, added that she could not be allowed to take cognisance of differences between King Louis and his subjects.

In administering the rebuff, Cardinal and Council were doing no more than enunciating an axiom of international relations. They might, had they been so minded, have gone further and retorted by recommending Christina to turn her attention to domestic affairs. For though the condition of Sweden contrasted favourably with that of France, its sovereign might have found amply sufficient to occupy her at home.

The great question of the succession was settled. Sweden was no longer without an acknowledged heir, and Christina's cousin was to be King whenever Providence—or, as she may secretly have added, herself

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 191, 192.

—should see fit to remove her elsewhere. Awaiting events, Prince Charles was showing his wisdom by a consistent policy of self-effacement, carefully abstaining from interference in state affairs, living quietly at his country place, displaying no preferences, making no enemies, and rousing no jealousy by claims based upon his new position. There was, indeed, little to invite a man whose power was contingent on the Queen's caprice to attempt the piloting of the national vessel. Dissension between the several Orders in the State was rife, and to take part with one would be to create enemies in another. Under these circumstances Prince Charles consulted his interests best by remaining at a distance.

The questions at issue were mainly concerned with a large amount of property which had been alienated from the Crown and granted to nobles.[1] The Orders antagonistic to the nobility demanded its restitution, whilst those in possession were firm in the defence of their rights. So far defeated but sullen, the assailants were awaiting an opportunity of renewing the attack ; the clergy adding another element of discord by claiming an undue weight in public affairs. The impoverished condition of the public finances, consequent upon the Queen's lavish gifts of lands from which the revenue of the State was drawn, was also giving rise to just and wide-spread disapproval, and occasioning a difficulty in meeting necessary expenditure.

Such being the state of the country at large, discontent was also rife at Court. Christina's open disregard of quarterings and genealogies was tending to rob ancient blood and race of their monopolies and to interfere with vested interests. Titles were still easier than lands to bestow, and the more prized because they had hitherto been few. The Senate was flooded with new names, even the Queen's tailor being ennobled.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 204.

And, besides all this, Magnus de la Gardie, as Grand Master of the Palace, reigned supreme in the Queen's good graces.

Neither Court nor country were therefore in a satisfactory condition, and notwithstanding Christina's love of power and high conception of the rights and privileges of sovereignty, her position at the head of a Government constantly confronted with money troubles might well, the novelty of rule over, begin to pall upon a woman whose interests were far from being limited to the administration of a kingdom. She had begun to attract to her Court the philosophers and men of letters whose society she prized; and, in contrast to the hours spent with them, the daily drudgery of uncongenial toil was thrown into yet more vivid relief. These considerations should be borne in mind in connection with her future conduct. The time was fast approaching when she was to make publicly known the comparative values she set upon the various goods life has to bestow, and to vindicate her liberty of choice. Whilst she sat at the feet of a new teacher or embarked on a fresh study, possibilities were taking shape before her eyes; and she was pondering a means of escape from the irksome duties of a mode of life leaving scanty leisure to devote to the objects alone rendering existence, in her opinion, desirable. Such meditations are seldom carried on wholly in secret. Before long rumours of an abdication had crept abroad, and had presently been so far authenticated that the French envoy was using his influence to discourage any step of the kind.

That Christina, at twenty-five, and with life before her, should have entertained the idea of resigning her sceptre must, when new, have been a fact startling and strange to all concerned. To her subjects, in whose eyes she was pre-eminently the daughter and representative of the great King they had lost, the thought of

her voluntary abandonment of the post he had bequeathed to her, with its duties and responsibilities, was bitter. To strangers and foreigners looking on, it meant a curious and interesting situation. To Charles Gustavus it opened out the chance of enjoyment in youth of an inheritance he can only have anticipated in the dim, uncertain future.

Christina's design was not destined to find its accomplishment until three years later. But in 1651 it appeared imminent. Nor is there any doubt that the Queen was then sincere in her wish to lay down at once the burden of government. Many motives combined to influence her. The period during which she had ruled, nominally or in fact, had been marked by success; and past success gives rise, in some natures, to a fear lest subsequent failure should dim its lustre. Moreover, she was well aware of the condition of the public Treasury—a condition partly consequent on her own reckless expenditure—and was too shrewd not to foresee a coming crisis. And, besides all this, the tedium of a daily routine of business was intolerable to her impatient and restless spirit. She longed for leisure for study, thought, and the play of imagination, crowded out by official cares. She wished to visit new countries, to enjoy the liberty denied to a Queen chained to the vessel of State.

"I think I see the devil when I see these men," she told Prince Charles, as her secretaries, bringing documents for signature, interrupted an interview with her cousin. To Chanut she wrote in the same strain: "I seem to see the devil with his horns when these torments of secretaries, always at my heels, approach." [1] She meant, she told the Prince, to resign the government to him who would have force, capacity, and wisdom to administer it.

To whatever motives it was due, the Queen's design,

[1] Lacombe, *Lettres secrètes*, p. 19.

from a mere startling rumour, became certainty in October 1651, when she imparted to the Senate, in an interview lasting over five hours and a half, her wish to transfer the crown to the head of the man who was now hereditary Prince of Sweden. The announcement had been already made to Charles, who, carrying out his former line of conduct, strongly deprecated the contemplated change, reiterating his professions of loyalty and of an obedience to last so long as Christina lived.

He could, perhaps, scarcely have done less. Abdication on his cousin's part was a measure unpopular in the extreme, and, had he benefited by it without opposition, he would have shared in its unpopularity. The Senate, together with the Notables of the Estates, then at Stockholm, brought all their powers of persuasion to bear to induce the Queen to relinquish her plan. With Oxenstiern, her father's old friend and servant, as their spokesman, they waited upon her in a body, and, partly by admonition and remonstrance, partly by appeal, strove to shake her resolution. In language sounding strangely in modern ears the Chancellor—no blind flatterer or courtier—warned her of the consequences to Sweden should she carry her intention into effect, and in the name of the chief officers of the State declared that, convinced that ruin would follow upon her withdrawal, should she relinquish the helm, they, for their part, would abandon the vessel ; and that, unwilling that posterity should reproach them with having consented to a step so dangerous to the country, each and all would resign their offices.

More was said ; money was promised from private sources for the maintenance of her house. Let Christina remain and all would be well. The Assembly was thrilled with emotion ; tears were shed ; and finally the Queen, not insensible to the loyalty and affection of which proof had been given, consented to

relinquish her project ; but on one condition. That condition was that the subject of marriage should never again be broached. The pledge was given, and the Senate was victorious.

Universal rejoicing hailed Christina's consent to retain her place upon the throne, and Charles, adding his congratulations to the rest, prayed God she might survive him, and repeated his determination not to accept the crown during her life-time. Those who were intimately acquainted with Christina must have suspected that the end was not yet.

Amid the general jubilation of a people who appear to have strangely felt that, deprived of their Queen, they would be unshepherded sheep, a discordant note was struck in the shape of a seditious appeal to the Prince to seize the reins of government and to put to death, with her chief councillors, a Queen who was bringing the country to ruin by means of her extravagance and amusements, and whose ear was possessed by the Constable de la Gardie, the Chancellor, and Count Magnus.

Prince Charles sent the document to the Queen ;[1] the author was discovered and executed, and the affair was at an end. It had given voice to the growing discontent of a faction hitherto only audible in murmurs.

Before quitting the subject of this first attempt on Christina's part to disembarrass herself of the reins of government, it should be observed that in later years it was her custom to explain her ultimate abdication on the grounds of religion. But it must be noted that at the time when the project first took shape, as well as at a somewhat later date, she appears to have had no leanings towards the faith she subsequently embraced. "I cannot consent," she wrote to Bishop Godeau in 1651, when, in sending her some of his compositions, he had added a hope that she might become a convert

[1] She afterwards denied the nature of its contents.

to Catholicism, "that you should desire and expect a thing that cannot come to pass. My mind has been chiefly applied to the search after truth, nor could I make a change without putting a greater distance between myself and the goal I have always set before me. I have long been persuaded that the things I believe are the things that should be believed. It would rather be for me to wish that, among the many fair lights by which your spirit is illumined, you possessed on this subject those that are mine."

Not less plainly was her attitude defined when, in 1652, a rumour reached Sweden that Prince Charles's brother-in-law, the Landgrave of Hesse-Eschwege, was intending to follow the example set by the Landgrave Ernest of Hesse-Rheinfels, and to embrace the Catholic religion. To the anxious Charles Gustavus she sent condolences and sympathy; to the possible backslider she addressed admonition and warning. "The subject of your grief is so just," she wrote to the first, "that I am in a difficulty in seeking for reasons which may comfort you." On the Landgrave she urged the motives which should make him pause. Leaving the disputes of theology to doctors and divines, she pressed upon him a point of honour. "Can you be unaware of the hatred incurred by him who changes from those from whom he separates; and do you not know, by many famous examples, that he is despised by those he joins? Consider, if you please, the importance to the reputation of a Prince that he should be esteemed constant, and be sure you will inflict great damage on your own, should you commit a like fault." And at much length she continued to point out to him the evil consequences of a repudiation of Protestantism, including, amongst them, an eternal remorse.[1]

In the face of these documents the theory which would explain by Christina's abdication her desire for

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 217, 218.

a change of religion alone may be dismissed ; although it will be seen that it had much to do with her final determination to carry the matter through three years after she had yielded to the instances of friends and councillors and had consented to retain her position at the head of the State.

CHAPTER VI

1647–51

The reign of the philosophers—Descartes and the Princess Elizabeth—Descartes at Stockholm—his death—Saumaise—French ascendancy.

IT was, during these early years, Christina's supreme ambition to assert her claim to the position of patroness, *par excellence*, of art, science, and literature. Providence had made her a Queen, and Providence had, in her opinion, done well. But there was another sovereignty, to be won by individual effort seconded by gifts and talents, and after this she strenuously strove.

To understand her life and character it is necessary to emphasise the relationship of personal friendship which it was her endeavour to establish between herself and the men she honoured and admired—a relationship, it may be added, though she might have resented the suggestion, essentially feminine. Intimacies were rashly formed, to be indignantly repudiated when she discovered, as was sometimes inevitably the case, that she had been misled by false appearances, or when the glamour appertaining to novelty had had time to vanish. Jealous as she was of her rights and authority, self-confident and proud of her capacities, she easily wearied of the dignified isolation of royalty, and was always engaged in the attempt to vindicate the inherent equality dependent upon correspondence in the qualities of mind and intellect. Whether such an attempt can

hope to be wholly successful may be open to question. It is scarcely less difficult to descend than to climb; and in the same way that the foreigner continues, in spite of naturalisation, a foreigner, so the dweller in one sphere who craves admission to another, be it higher or lower, commonly remains, in his new surroundings, more or less of a stranger. Between sovereign and subject in particular the assumption of equality cannot escape a tincture of artificiality, and, however successfully the farce is played, moments will occur when one or another of the actors will forget his part and resume his own character.

Christina's abilities, her passionate love of study, her indefatigable pursuit of learning, went far to qualify her for the position she coveted; and her desire to sit at the feet of the men who had won a high place in the school where she was a beginner was genuine. Her reverence for great attainments, knowledge, and culture, was profound, and the influence at her Court of the *savants* she summoned thither, if short-lived, was, so long as it lasted, considerable. Having set marriage aside as a state of life for which she had no vocation, literature and the arts represented to her, at this time, the chief pleasures of existence. Her curiosity was boundless, her ambition to excel in learning as her father had excelled in war.

Besides all this, she aimed at the reputation of a sovereign who had succeeded in rendering a Court—to use her words—"au bout du monde," a place to which men pre-eminent in scholarship should be attached, as to their natural centre. To this end her efforts were directed, to compass it she spared neither pains nor money, and she was rewarded by success. Foreign celebrities—more especially from France—responded to her invitations, not unfrequently accompanied by earnests of the golden harvest they might hope to reap. To serious scholars the fame of

the library collected at Stockholm, its eight thousand manuscripts, Eastern and Western, its valuable printed matter, medals, and pictures, offered an additional inducement, and combined with more material hopes to draw them to the Swedish capital. The northern city represented the Paradise of men of learning. Christina's attitude towards them was rather that of a disciple than of a mistress. "I should find it hard to believe," she wrote to Bochart, as yet personally unknown to her, "that you could have had any good will towards me . . . had you not taken the trouble to assure me of it by your letter"; and she begged to be permitted to count him amongst the number of her friends. To Gassendi she wrote in terms no less flattering, asking to be allowed at times to interrupt his meditations by her letters: "I shall consult you as the oracle of truth, to dissipate my doubts; and, should you take the trouble to instruct my ignorance, you will do no more than add to the number of those who know how to give you your true value." When M. Claude Sarrau, a member of the Paris Parlement, sent her a proffer of his services, she begged him to believe that her only exercise of the rights he had accorded her would be to command him to exchange the position of servant for that of friend. "If, after this, I still retain some authority, I will say that I desire that the affection you have so generously bestowed upon me should be preserved. . . . Your generosity, not my deserts, justifies my claim."

This being the style adopted by the Queen in addressing the men she delighted to honour, it was no wonder that M. de Scudéry should have waxed eloquent on the subject of her epistolary powers. "What you write in our language," he told her, "causes the pen to fall from our hands. Your Majesty's letters are objects of admiration to all *beaux-esprits*, and perhaps of their envy. In truth, Madame, in the same way

that Philip of Macedon demanded of his son, Alexander, if he were not ashamed to play the lyre and sing so well, I might almost ask your Majesty, in my turn, what you are dreaming of to write so well."

Some of Christina's correspondents remained at a distance ; others, responding to her invitations, visited Stockholm. To these last the Queen occupied the double position of hostess and pupil. The more favoured were lodged in the Palace itself, and all were honoured guests. An Academy was formed, and held weekly meetings. Days were spent in social intercourse, nights in study.

Amongst the earliest and most eminent of the foreign visitors was Descartes, already possessing a royal disciple in the Princess Elizabeth, niece of Charles I. He had been known to Christina by fame since, at twenty, she had submitted to him, through Chanut, one of the moral problems she loved to discuss—namely, whether, given a bad use of them, love or hatred was productive of the worst consequences. Even theoretical morality, propounded by a Queen, may be treated as having a bearing upon conduct. Descartes entered with zest into the inquiry, and a lengthy dissertation, forwarded to Chanut, was not only approved by Christina, but called forth a further inquiry to be placed before the philosopher ; the question of love, with which it dealt, being one of the few she felt herself incompetent to deal with.

Not forgetful of his earlier devotee, it occurred to Descartes that, could Elizabeth and Christina be brought together, it would be for the advantage of both ; and in blundering masculine fashion he set himself to prepare the way for an acquaintanceship between the two. It may be, as M. de Careil hints, that his methods implied a certain ignorance of women, and that in offering for Christina's perusal his letters to Elizabeth, and asking permission from the Princess

to accompany them by her replies, he went the way to please neither.[1] A silence on Christina's part appears to have followed, and it was not until the spring of 1647 that the hopes he had cherished of an invitation to Elizabeth to visit Stockholm seemed likely to be realised. At that time the Princess was a guest of the Elector of Brandenburg at Berlin, where she met Marie-Eleonore, in a more congenial atmosphere than that of her daughter's Court; and though Elizabeth wrote to Descartes to complain of being obliged to follow the Queen-mother every day in sledges, and every night to entertainments and balls,[2] intercourse between the two resulted in a revival of Descartes' plan. A journey to Sweden was projected, with the stipulation on Christina's part that the idea should be represented as originating with her mother, and it seemed possible that his pupils would be brought face to face. Two months later, however, a change had passed over Christina. Her desire to entertain a rival scholar had perhaps never been over-keen, and the matter was allowed to drop. She may have feared reproaches, for the peace negotiations were in progress, on which occasion small care was displayed on behalf of the interests of the unfortunate Palatine family; or her coldness may simply have been due to indifference to the society of women.

Had Christina been in danger of forgetting Descartes himself, she would not have been allowed to do so; Chanut being at hand to keep her in mind of his countryman. In a letter to the sage, of December 1648, he described a journey taken in her company, and showed he had turned the opportunity to account. "I took your *Principles of Philosophy* with me. I read her the Preface. She opened the book in places, and

[1] Foucher de Careil, *Descartes, la Princesse Elizabeth, et la Reine Christine*, pp. 97, 98.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

was very pensive for some days. I knew what had set her dreaming, and when I ventured to tell her that she appeared to me divided between a desire to learn that philosophy and the thought of the difficulty she would find in acquiring it, she confessed that I had divined the cause of her trouble." [1]

It was finally arranged that the Queen's historiographer should be directed to master the *Principles*, so that he might be qualified to smooth the path of knowledge for his mistress. But Christina was not content to be the disciple of an absent philosopher, and an invitation to Stockholm was dispatched to Descartes, who, not without searchings of heart, decided to accept it. Would his presence, he questioned in a letter to Chanut, be of any avail ? Experience had taught him to doubt it. Though his opinions might give rise to surprise at first, their very simplicity, their conformity to common sense, caused them, once understood, to cease to be considered admirable, and nothing was thought of them ; so that, though he desired nothing so much as to communicate the little he believed himself to know, he scarcely met any person who desired to learn it.[2] He also indulged apprehensions that, being the originator of a novel philosophy, as well as a Roman Catholic, the Queen might be prejudiced against him. His misgivings were dispelled, and by October 1649, a season ill chosen by a southern guest, he appeared at the Swedish Court.

His reputation had preceded him. " Madame, it is not a man I have brought you ; it is a demi-god," was the answer of the pilot of the vessel which had conveyed him to Sweden to the Queen's question concerning the passenger. She was ready to receive him as such, and his brief stay at Stockholm was favourably inaugurated. After no more than a couple of interviews, Descartes

[1] V. de Swarte, *Descartes Directeur Spirituel*, p. 258.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

was able to inform the Princess Elizabeth—possibly another evidence of an absence of tact—that he seemed to know the Queen well enough to venture to say that she did not fall short of her renown—which was to say much ; Elizabeth taking care to assure him that she was not jealous, and expressing her gratification at hearing the reputation Christina had won confirmed.

Nor is there any reason to believe that the Queen was disappointed in the expectations she had formed regarding the philosopher ; but, with the best will in the world, the time she could bestow upon a foreign guest was limited ; and though, bent upon making the most of the opportunities presented by his visit, she was ready to steal hours from sleep to devote to study, it does not appear, judging by a letter written by Descartes in January, that interviews had been frequent.[1]

The ascendancy he was nevertheless believed to have obtained over his pupil during the early morning hours when the two met in the palace library was sufficient to alarm those who saw in the guest an intruder, the more dangerous and obnoxious by reason of the religion he professed. Whatever effect his teaching was to have, the time during which the Queen was to profit by it was brief. By February 1650 he had been laid to rest in a foreign country, his burial-place, by the desire of his friend Chanut, being chosen amongst the graves of little children and orphans, the French envoy considering "this place more fitting for M. Descartes than any other."[2]

The catastrophe was variously explained. Madame de Motteville mentions a report that it was due to Christina's disapproval of the sage's system of philosophy. Others, after the prevailing fashion, attributed it to poison. A simpler explanation is that the northern winter, to a man unaccustomed to it—perhaps also the

[1] V. de Swarte, *Descartes Directeur Spirituel.*
[2] *Holmia Literata*, part iv., quoted by Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 228.

early hours kept by his royal pupil—had proved fatal.

If Descartes' residence at Stockholm had been short, it was, according to Christina herself, fruitful in consequences, and greatly contributed to her subsequent conversion. Providence, she afterwards said, had made use of him and of Chanut to give her the first lights on the subject of the religion he practised, and in which he died. Christina should be a good authority on the subject, yet the statement is difficult to reconcile with the documentary evidence already quoted as to the prejudices she entertained towards Catholicism at a date when the lessons were over and the teacher had taken his way hence.

Descartes was only one member, though a prominent one, of the group of distinguished men drawn to Christina's Court, amongst whom Claude de Saumaise, or Salmasius, was likewise a conspicuous figure.

Though her invitation to Saumaise had been accompanied by her portrait and other gifts, the response he made to it was at first unfavourable. Being a thin man, he replied, Sweden was too cold, England too hot, for him—in reference to the danger he might incur of being captured on the way by a Government he had attacked in print. Refusing to be discouraged, Christina continued urgent in her solicitations, going so far as to declare that, did he not visit Sweden, she would herself go to seek him ; and in the end he consented to pass more than a year at Stockholm, refusing to settle there permanently, or to resign the post he held at Leyden. Scarcely more than two years later, he had passed away, bitterly regretted by Christina.

"If the death of the great Saumaise is to-day a subject of grief to all rational people," she wrote to his widow, "and every one is offering you condolence, judge what must be my feelings as to this irreparable loss. You know with what esteem I honoured his

merit, and you are witness that my tenderness towards him was as true as towards a father. . . . Do not expect that I shall try to console you. Your sorrow is just; and you should spend the rest of your days in deploring your loss, together with that crime of homicide committed by you on his writings"—Madame de Saumaise having, in obedience to her husband's wishes, destroyed a quantity of his controversial productions. "Never will I forgive you for having inflicted a second death upon the man most deserving of immortality." She would, nevertheless, remembering that the culprit was the wife of Saumaise, show her and her children by deeds how great had been her love for the dead.

Christina kept her promise, and the little son of her friend was brought to Court to profit by her kindness. It was significant of the rapid changes in her point of view that by the time he arrived she had recognised the fact that there are lessons to be mastered besides those contained in books, and is said to have told the child that she hoped he would, unlike his father, be something besides a man of learning—a hint upon which, it is further stated, the boy was only too ready to act.

Vossius, the Queen's librarian, and at one time high in her favour, does not appear to have merited the distinction. In common with others of his brotherhood, he has been charged with rifling of some of its treasures the library he had been partly instrumental in collecting; he is also said to have combined scepticism and credulity to a singular degree. "This learned theologian is a strange person," Charles II. is quoted as observing when, at a later date, Vossius occupied the post of Canon of Windsor. "He believes everything except the Bible."

The places of the men of letters removed by death or by a return to their own countries and duties were quickly filled, and the number of French visitors in

particular was sufficient to cause anger and jealousy to the Queen's countrymen. The greater part of her servants were French, no less than twenty *savants* of that nation, pretended or genuine, being said to have made Stockholm their headquarters. France was the fashion at the Swedish Court. The pity of it was that, in the Queen and her guests alike, there was a marked absence of that equable and serene spirit which should have reigned in a philosophic centre. Envy and jealousy were rife ; one man of learning was the rival of another, and all were engaged in the endeavour to win the Queen's good graces. Chevreau, Christina's French secretary, who afterwards described her in a paper that cannot be charged with partiality, gave a frank account, in a letter to Saumaise, who had by that time quitted Stockholm, of the conduct of his fellow-countrymen.

"We have here," he wrote, "certain persons who make no great scruple of compassing the fall of those they meet on their way, provided that they themselves rise ; who feel contempt for what they do not possess, and therefore despise honour, merit, and virtue. What is most astonishing is that they are neither Goths nor Vandals, but Frenchmen, who everywhere decry their nation, who are everywhere themselves decried, and continue to make a profit out of the blindness of Fortune" —perhaps also out of the blindness of Christina.

Even men of real learning were apt to fall out, and Vossius, who had shared the Queen's favour with Saumaise, so offended his mistress by, as it was supposed, an attack upon his friend, that he was sent to expiate his disloyalty at leisure in foreign lands ; Christina explaining to Bochart, in whose company her librarian had been on the point of returning to Sweden when arrested by her mandate, that no one but the sage himself was responsible for his disgrace, since none could boast of influencing her in these matters.

If the Queen was too much disposed to regard herself, in literature and art, as matchless in her age and century, it is difficult to blame a woman whom all were in a conspiracy to flatter. In Malherbe's eyes she was a Queen whose sceptre had not been necessary to render her the glory of her sex and one of the rarest marvels of her time. Comparing her with Mæcenas, Scarron wrote that, had the two been contemporaries, that patron of art would have lost his occupation, and would have been as indignant as his master, Cæsar Augustus, with whom Gustavus Adolphus might have contested the empire of the universe. Balzac, since Christina had given him her praise, envied neither Claudian his statue nor Petrarch his crown. Heinsius, one of the few honest men employed by her in her literary adventures, wrote from Italy, whither he had been sent on a quest after artistic treasures, that her name was there held in veneration ; that panegyrics had been written and works dedicated to her in Italian, until these tributes had been forbidden by the Pope ; that the Duke of Brescia had made a medal of her with his own hands, and the Grand Duke Leopold had caused a collection of unpublished writings to be put together as an offering to her.

Such are a few examples of the species of incense offered at the shrine of the Minerva of the North during the years of her brilliant youth. It was no wonder if she found it intoxicating. Changes, however, were to take place at the Swedish Court, and the fortunes of the men of learning gathered together there were on the decline.

CHAPTER VII

1651–53

Reign of the philosophers over—Bourdelot—Popular discontent—Queen-mother's remonstrance—Magnus de la Gardie's disgrace.

THE exaggeration of a sentiment is a presage of reaction, and a taste which has carried all before it is peculiarly liable to decay. In early life novelty and excitement may almost be said to be essentials of existence, and in the Court of a Queen scarcely past her first youth changes or phases were prone to succeed one another with startling rapidity. Christina has been freely reproached with her preferences; but it must be remembered that a foolish or extravagant attachment which, under other circumstances, might pass unnoticed, is the object of unsparing criticism when a woman stoops from a throne to display it. The Swedish Court was now to be the scene of an episode causing general indignation and wrath.

The grace shown to Magnus de la Gardie had been bitterly resented by the faction amongst the nobles opposed to him and his family, and their irritation had not been unjustified. He was to be replaced in the Queen's favour by a man still more objectionable in their eyes. The Constable's son had been one of themselves, belonging to their order. There was to be substituted for him the French doctor, or, as some would have termed him, the French quack, Bourdelot. It may be the fact that, like other favourites, he was harshly judged by the men to whom he was

preferred; that, as Baron de Bildt considers, he was rather trivial than vicious. But the position he was to enjoy at Court, as the Queen's adviser and intimate, was none the less an affront to the nation.

Bourdelot's presence at Stockholm has been variously explained. Gui Patin, who disliked and despised him, seems to assert that he himself had had the offer of the post, and it was only when, fearing the cold of the Swedish climate, he had declined it, that it fell to the lot of this "charlatan canonisé par la fortune."[1] By others his advancement has been ascribed, in the first instance, to one of the very class of *savants* he was destined to supplant. Saumaise had, at the time the doctor appeared upon the scene, returned to his duties at Leyden, and it is believed, truly or falsely, that, fearing the loss of the ascendancy he had exerted over Christina, he deputed his countryman to act at her Court as his representative. It was, at all events, with an introduction from the absent philosopher that the man of medicine arrived at Stockholm and was at once accepted as the Queen's counsellor on matters of health and as her confidant.

The son of a barber at Sens called Michon and by trade an apothecary, he had assumed the name of an uncle, and had withdrawn for a time to Italy, to reappear in the guise of a physician, in high favour, according to his own account of the matter, with the Pope, and having only missed the reward of a cardinal's hat by the necessity of a return to his native land. From thence he proceeded, armed with Saumaise's introduction, to seek his fortunes in Sweden.

It was at a fortunate moment that he arrived at the northern capital.[2] Christina was expiating her custom of setting the laws of health at defiance, and stood in instant need of medical advice. During the spring of 1650 she had been for weeks laid up by fever,

[1] *Lettres*, t. ii., p. 267. [2] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 236 *seq.*

accompanied by alarming weakness. The doctors, indeed, were inclined to make light of the matter, or to deny that the malady was dangerous ; but the people had taken fright. Stories were told of phantom funerals, seen in the night, and of spectres which had danced in the Queen's park.[1] And though this illness had passed away, she had been suddenly overtaken, in the course of the following year, by an attack of faintness, rendering her unconscious for above an hour. It was noticed that, feeling herself fainting, she had said adieu to Magnus de la Gardie, who was at her side ; and that, on recovering, she had told her physician that she had thought never to see him again.[2]

If she had been seriously alarmed it was the more natural that she should have been grateful to the man who brought a remedy to her ills. The advice tendered by Bourdelot was not only marked by good sense ; it was successful. No deep knowledge of the laws of health was required to diagnose her complaint and to perceive that the Queen was suffering the natural results of insufficient sleep and over-application to study. Surrounded by men of learning and keenly ambitious of acquiring all they had to teach, she had overtaxed her brain to a serious extent. Bourdelot told her so plainly, warning her that the course she was pursuing was injuring her health, and, carried on, would end by shortening her life. Let her leave these things to pedants and philosophers. In France a learned woman—it was the time of the *Précieuses Ridicules*—was derided. So Bourdelot argued ; the Queen—perhaps secretly weary of books—listened and believed ; acted on his suggestion, gave up her studies, felt better, and was grateful to the doctor to whom her amendment was due. Bourdelot was, for the rest, an agreeable companion, a dexterous flatterer, had a pretty talent for singing and playing the guitar, was learned, not

[1] Chanut, t. ii., pp. 34, 35. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 220.

indeed in science and literature, but in perfumery and the culinary art ; and his faults were not such as were at once patent. "He lies almost as much as he speaks," said Patin, whose pen was not seldom dipped in venom, "and, when it is possible, also deceives his patients. He is a courtier, with deep-set eyes, an apothecary's valet." [1]

A greater contrast to the brotherhood of science and philosophy by whom Christina had been lately surrounded can scarcely be conceived ; and it may be that, her books once laid aside, a reaction had set in, and that, after constant association with sages, the society of a man frankly ignorant of the subjects they treated may have afforded a welcome change. It was, nevertheless, natural that those who looked on should have judged with severity the intimacy of their Queen with a stranger wholly unfitted by birth, education, or training to stand at the right hand of the throne. Doctors freely charged him with ignorance of medicine, asserting that those senators who, following their mistress's example, had called him in, had died of their rash confidence in the foreign practitioner ; and his countryman, Chevreau, the Queen's Secretary, declared he was a charlatan who committed murders when he undertook cures.

Christina took a different view, and, regarding her physician in the light of the man who had saved her life, was indifferent enough, it may be conjectured, as to whether his treatment had been marked by orthodox methods or not. To Gassendi, who owed his introduction to him, she wrote of the doctor in extravagant terms of praise.

"I am infinitely obliged," she said, "to him who has acquainted you with a portion of the sentiments with which I regard you, the more so because this good office is in addition to other services he has

[1] *Lettres*, t. i., p. 513.

rendered me. And though I confess that to him I owe my restoration to health and my life, and that after this it would seem that nothing could be added to my debt, I nevertheless own that to have procured for me the assurance of your esteem equals all the other services he has done me."

The day of the *savants* was, in fact, over and that of Bourdelot, doctor, jester, *plaisant compagnon*, had begun. To the ascendancy he exercised over Christina was ascribed in some quarters the change in her views, principles, and manner of life, culminating in her abdication and abjuration of the Lutheran faith. "A monster France had brought forth," wrote one of her domestics "who was privy to her most secret practices,"[1] "did so skilfully win her heart, yea, possessed it, that all the time he stayed he handled her at his pleasure and for his own profit, but to the grief and discontent of all the world, yea, of the chief of the kingdom, who, weary with the impertinencies of a man of nothing, did twice or thrice attempt upon his life"—with, it is to be assumed, the entire approval of the anonymous writer.

Bourdelot's power may have been exaggerated; there is no doubt that it was sufficient to cause legitimate discontent, not only to the displaced men of learning, but to those with more right to resent his intrusion into the secret counsels of the Queen. Practical difficulties ensued. Access to her was hard to obtain; whilst she was understood to be finding entertainment in "jests and ridiculous sports."[2]

Ministers of State looked helplessly on at the Queen's infatuation. The man who suffered most by it, having most to lose, was Magnus de la Gardie, occupying, as Grand Treasurer, and Grand Master of

[1] *A Brief Relation of the Life of Christina, Queen of Sweden*, translated from the French. Anon., 1656.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the Palace, the first place at Court. With Bourdelot's arrival a change in Christina's relations with him had set in, and her affection was manifestly on the wane. Convinced that her coldness was due to the ill offices of the Frenchman, the Count took the unwise step of addressing a formal protest to the Queen. He might have foreseen that it would prove useless. The very fact that the conduct of a friend calls for upbraiding presupposes a condition of affairs rendering upbraiding vain. The Queen denied the charges brought against Bourdelot, demanded that they should be proved, and when, face to face with the accused, Magnus summoned the witnesses upon whom he had counted to substantiate his statements, they refused, paralysed by the presence of the Queen, to repeat their assertions, and were denounced by her as impostors, de la Gardie being included in their disgrace.[1] Bourdelot was triumphant, and Magnus, with no immediate prospect of retrieving his position, was only desirous of absenting himself, for the present, from Court.

His misfortune was proof to all the world of the position achieved by the doctor. It was recognised that the situation was grave, and the French resident, Picques, was solicited to obtain Bourdelot's recall, accompanied by the offer of some post at home that would ensure his obedience. Picques, however, demurred. It would be manifestly difficult for his master to remove from the Queen a man she judged necessary to the preservation of her health ; moreover, the very importance conferred upon him by the suggested course would raise him in Christina's esteem, and tend to increase his influence. Though thus declining to interfere, Picques was not without his own reasons for distrust in the lengthy interviews between the interloper and the Spanish envoy, Pimentelli, Bourdelot's uncle having

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 361.

From the original painting.

COUNT MAGNUS DE LA GARDIE.

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been physician to Condé, and Condé being supported by Spain. Uneasiness was, in fact, general, and Bochart and Lager, two of the discarded *savants*, wrote to their colleague Vossius, still abroad, that he would find many changes on his return, the Queen being now rarely visible to any one. In April 1653 Bochart reiterated his complaints. Expressing himself, as he explained, *à demi-mot*, lest his letter should go astray, the unhappy man of learning described the change that had taken place at Court. "I know not yet," he added, "when I shall depart. It would be to-day, had I my desire. . . . We shall all go together—the Physician-in-Chief, the Apothecary, the Chirurgian, the Librarian, the Curator of the Cabinet of Antiquities, the Archbishop of Ireland, M. Tott, and myself, and *quis non* ?" [1]

Matters were going from bad to worse, and the prejudice against Bourdelot was strengthening. Charged with atheism and impiety, with holding strange opinions and infecting the Queen with them, he was doubtless considered responsible for anything in her conduct that was offensive to public taste and sentiment. It was observed that, assisting at the services of the church, her bearing was not such as to win the approval of serious-minded persons. At sermons and functions "she used to sit in a chair of purple velvet, and lean her head and arms on another ; questionless building (after the proverb) fine castles in the air." [2] Worse still, should the minister's exhortations run to too great a length, she would occupy herself in playing with two little spaniels, or would rap upon her chair with her fan to intimate that she was impatient.

People of all ranks and stations were disturbed in mind ; the clergy prepared to administer a private remonstrance ; and the Queen-mother—returned to Sweden, and leading an obscure life in her daughter's

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 101. [2] *A Brief Relation*, etc., p. 8.

vicinity—nerved herself to broach the subject to Christina. An interview between mother and daughter took place, when the young Queen, after listening for some time to Marie-Eleonore's admonitions to be true to the religion of her father, put an end to the discussion by observing that these matters should be left to priests ; adding curtly, when her mother refused to be silenced, that she knew of whom she was the spokeswoman, and that she would teach them who she was, and cause them to recognise their imprudence.

"After this the Queen departed, leaving her mother, who melted into tears. Two hours later she was told that it was impossible to approach her or to stop her weeping." Christina answered coldly ; her mother, she said, had drawn it upon herself. Learning, however, that Eleonore continued inconsolable, she was moved to compassion, and paid her a visit, avoiding any return to the disputed question. After which, somewhat recovered in spirits, the Queen-mother withdrew to Nyköping.[1]

Those acquainted with Christina might have been content to permit matters to take their course, in the confidence that one phase, or one favourite, would not long remain predominant, and that opposition would do no more than serve to defer the inevitable end. In Bourdelot's case the change was to be scarcely less complete than in de la Gardie's. In his day of power, so blind was the Queen's affection that a word against that idol was, according to Bochart, enough to ruin the speaker. It was impossible that this condition of affairs could last ; and whether Christina was privately wearying of the master of the revels, or whether, autocratic as she was, she recognised the fact that public patience had limits, it was decided that her domestic physician should leave the country. He was accordingly sent home, putting as good a face

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 241.

as he could upon the matter ; and protesting to Chanut that he had received no dismissal, and was commissioned by the Queen to negotiate matters of importance at the French Court.

Christina may, in truth, have been employing him to sound the authorities at Paris on the questions both of abdication and religion. The allegation, on the other hand, may have been merely invented by Bourdelot to cover his retreat. A letter of Mazarin's to the Queen tends to confirm his assertion. Dated January 1654, the Cardinal informed Christina that he had conversed openly with the doctor, and that "as soon as your Majesty's letter in favour of the Sieur Bourdelot was delivered to me I caused the brevet of the Abbacy to be sent to him"—taking care that it should be made clear that he owed it to the Queen—a Queen who, as the Cardinal assured her politely, was not more absolute in her own Court than at Paris.[1]

Although it is, therefore, evident that he had not been dismissed in disgrace, it was no less certain that Bourdelot's reign in Sweden, like those of his predecessors, was at an end ; laden with his spoils of gifts and money, he no doubt found consolation in a return to his native country, where he assumed the character and bearing of a person of consequence and distinction.

"He says," wrote Gui Patin to Spon in derision, "that a man must be sent to Sweden, and that he hopes to be given that post. *Hé bien!* has he not a good opinion of himself, for the son of a barber at Sens? Will you not marvel and be filled with rejoicing, when you hear M. de Bourdelot named ambassador of the Most Christian King at the Court of the Most Serene Queen of Sweden?"

Bourdelot's anticipations were not realised. His hold over Christina did not survive the test of absence,

[1] *Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin*, t. vi., p. 108.

and if Chanut is to be believed, not only did she speak of him slightingly, but—explaining away her infatuation—asserted that she had always known him to be filled with vanity, and had merely desired to see how far his ambition would carry him. Which no doubt prudent courtiers affected to believe.

It was June 1653 when Bourdelot left Sweden, raising the hopes of Magnus de la Gardie that he would be reinstated in the position he had forfeited. To recover lost ground is no easy matter, nor was the Count wise in the methods he adopted. He made scenes, brought unsupported charges against other men, incurred Christina's fresh displeasure, and when, from his place of retirement in the country, he addressed an appeal to her, her reply was unfavourable.[1] Her letter is sufficiently characteristic to be worth quoting in part, putting the seal as it does to an estrangement closing a friendship of years.

"Monsieur," she wrote, "since you desire to see me once again after the disgrace you have incurred, I am compelled to tell you how much that desire is contrary to your interest, writing you this letter to remind you of the reasons which prevent me from granting it, and which should likewise convince you that an interview would be useless. It is not for me to apply remedies to your ill: from yourself alone can reparation to your honour proceed. What can you hope from me, or what can I do save pity or blame you? The attachment I had for you compels me to do both, and, however great has been my indulgence, I cannot, without being untrue to myself, pardon you the crime you have committed against yourself. Do not believe that I am offended. I protest to you that I am not. I am incapable of any other sentiment but pity; which, however, can be of no service to you, since you yourself have rendered

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 359.

inoperative the kindness I felt. By your confession you are unworthy of it, and in the presence of several persons of condition you pronounced your own decree of banishment. I confirmed it because I thought it just, and am not so ready to unsay my words as you have been led to believe. After what you have done and permitted, do you venture to appear before me? I am ashamed when I think to what baseness you have fallen. . . . Were I capable of repentance, I should regret that I had felt affection for a soul so weak as yours; but this weakness is unworthy of me. . . . During nine years I have done too much for you, have taken your part blindly against all; but now that you have abandoned your dearest interests I am dispensed from the care of them. You have made public a secret which I had resolved to keep all my life, in showing that you were unworthy of the fortune I had conferred upon you. If you have determined upon listening to reproaches, you may come hither. On this condition I consent; but indulge no hope that tears or submission will move me to the least complaisance. The only complaisance of which I am capable towards you is to think of you little and speak less, since I have resolved only to speak in order to blame. . . . Remember, nevertheless, that it is to yourself that you owe your disgrace, and that towards you, as towards all the world, I am just."[1]

After the receipt of this missive even a man as confident in his past power over the woman who wrote it as Count Magnus, must have recognised that further entreaty would be useless, and that he had indeed fallen on evil days. The sequel will show that it would have been for Christina's interest had she proved less implacable.

Mazarin, watching events from a distance, doubtless regretted the fall of a man who, with a strain of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 359, 360.

French blood in his veins and with French sympathies, could be counted upon to further the interests of France. But, too politic to attempt direct interference, he contented himself with hinting at a possible reconsideration of the Queen's verdict. Instructing the French Resident to thank Christina for a message acquainting him with what had occurred, he expressed admiration for her justice and equity in the matter of this *célèbre disgrâce*, but pitied the man on whom the thunderbolt had fallen, and respected misfortune in the person of the guilty. He likewise entered into the Queen's regret at being forced to abandon, in Magnus, the work of her hands, bearing so many marks of her goodness, and anticipated that clemency might succeed justice. To Magnus he sent a message of compassion and sympathy, repeating his hopes that Christina might relent.[1]

The Cardinal's hopes were not destined to be realised, and Magnus's disgrace was the reinstatement in the Queen's confidence of the Chancellor Oxenstiern and his son, always the rivals of the house of de la Gardie. An appeal made by the Count to his former opponent for help and advice goes far to justify Christina's opinion of him, and merits the rebuff bestowed by the old statesman, who replied by making use of words formerly used by the younger man when he had asserted that Oxenstiern was in his dotage and incapable of supplying counsel. Though, consulted by the Queen, the Chancellor made a show of advocating a more lenient policy, he could hardly be expected to prove a whole-hearted mediator; nor was Prince Charles Gustavus more successful in the intercession he made on behalf of his brother-in-law. Whilst answering with courtesy, Christina made it clear, in her character of incarnate justice, that her decision was final. Her cousin's sympathy for the delinquent

[1] *Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin*, t. vi., pp. 117, 118.

increased both her compassion and her grief at her inability to do more than pity him. She had rendered blind obedience to justice, and was satisfied with her conduct.[1]

There was no more to be said. Magnus, as far as Christina was concerned, had ceased to exist. She was to find him inconveniently living at a future period.

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. i., p. 636.

CHAPTER VIII

1653–4

Pimentelli in favour—Père Mannerschied's account of the Queen—Whitelocke's mission—Revival of the project of abdication—Letter to Charles II.

AT Christina's Court the post of favourite was never long vacant. De la Gardie had retired into the background; Bourdelot had left the kingdom. But before this latter event had taken place another foreigner had appeared at Stockholm, and was soon accepted as the Queen's friend and confidant. This was Don Antonio Pimentelli, sent to Sweden as Spanish ambassador. Pimentelli had been chosen well. Unlike Bourdelot, he was of noble birth, a distinguished soldier, and a courtier. Already past middle age when he arrived at Stockholm, he may easily have appeared to the Queen the adviser of whom she stood in need at a time when her plans for the future were maturing, and he is credited with having exercised no little influence over her in matters of religion.

If the account given by one writer of his introduction to her Court is true, he had at once taken her measure and gauged the amount of flattery it would be safe to administer. On his first audience, presented to Christina seated upon her throne, he simply bowed profoundly and withdrew; explaining in a subsequent interview that, struck dumb by the brilliancy of her presence, the intervening hours had been necessary to enable him to collect himself sufficiently to appear

before her. After this fashion was inaugurated a close intimacy, once more regarded by her subjects with dislike and suspicion. Christina was never discreet in her methods of exhibiting her likings, nor inclined to consult public opinion in the matter. When Bourdelot was in favour she had withdrawn herself to so great an extent from the public eye that the Court "did appear like a desert or solitude,"[1] and now that he was replaced by Pimentelli, walks together and private audiences lasting far into the night gave subject matter to scandal-mongers, and disquieted those politicians who had reason to be apprehensive of Spanish influence.

Of her life at this time a vivid description is given by the chaplain who had accompanied Pimentelli on his mission, and whose favourable verdict is the less to be suspected of partiality since it is evident that the Queen had given him no reason to suspect that *la bonne religion*—the only thing wanting to her in his eyes—was shortly to become hers. Often as he had conversed with her, never, he regretfully remarks, had he been able to induce her to enter upon that subject. Whatever might be the case with his master—and it cannot be doubted that the envoy was in her confidence—Christina had kept her own counsel so far as his chaplain was concerned.

Religion apart, the priest had little but admiration to express. Bourdelot gone, Christina had reverted to her former habits ; the day was crowded with work and pleasure, and study encroached to a perilous degree upon the hours that should have been given to sleep. If she was determined to resign her post, so long as she held it she was sedulous in the performance of her public duties, and the mornings were devoted to business and to attendance at the Council of State. God, she said, had entrusted to her the government of

[1] *A Brief Relation*, etc.

the kingdom ; she would do her best, and should she fail she would be free from self-reproach. In accordance with this principle of personal supervision, all affairs, political or diplomatic, passed through her hands. With her ambassadors transacted their business, and she would study treatises on domestic matters till she had mastered their contents. The foreign ecclesiastic, observing her closely, noted that, friendly as she was in private talk, she knew how to assume, when necessary, the bearing of a queen, and had a curious power of imposing upon the great Swedish generals, who, famed throughout Europe at that time, became mute and timid in her presence : " I have seen her pass in a moment from a familiar conversation to the gravity befitting royalty, and from one extreme to the other, so that I distrusted my own eyes." On informal occasions she would talk to her friends with the ease of an equal, take them by the hand, and laugh and jest with them. Such favoured persons were ordinarily men. The ladies of her Court were principally for show, and she had little to do with them.

Slightly below middle height, her forehead was broad, her eyes bright and well set. She had an aquiline nose, a pretty mouth, and hair combed not oftener than once a week. Her dress was not only plain but neglected, her cuffs frequently defaced by ink-stains, her linen torn. Taken to task for the small account she made of personal appearance, she would reply, with contempt, that cares of that kind were for the idle. In the matter of food she was no less indifferent. No one had heard her so much as allude to the subject, or remark whether dishes were well or ill prepared, her single preference being for the plainest. Fearing neither cold, heat, nor rain, she was an accomplished rider, and in winter would drive in her sledge until nightfall. He had often heard her say, wrote the priest—one fancies that Christina was fond of talking

From the original painting.

QUEEN CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN.

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about herself, her peculiarities and idiosyncrasies—that she lived without grief or care, that she knew nothing in the world which could disturb her tranquillity, and that she feared death no more than sleep. There was a cosmopolitanism of sentiment about her remarkable in a woman whose experiences had, so far, been limited to a single country. Two nations only, she would say, existed—the bad and the good. The last she loved, the other she hated, without reference to the names borne by the several peoples inhabiting the earth.

On one point Père Mannerschied is silent. Whilst his master occupied the post, for the moment, of the Queen's confidential adviser, de la Gardie's place had been filled by a countryman of her own, and Count Tott, described by Cromwell's envoy, Whitelocke, as "a civil, handsome young courtier, of good parts and mettle, and much of the French mode," was favourite *en titre*.

In December 1653 the English ambassador had arrived in Sweden, and during the following months his journal supplies a detailed account of all that went on at Court. To England, at war with the Dutch, it was important to convert the neutral policy hitherto pursued by Christina into relations of definite amity; and with this object the envoy had been dispatched to Stockholm. Flattered by the cordiality of his reception, and more conscientious than acute, he did not at once perceive that, as the weeks went by, little progress was effected in the matter of his mission, and that the Queen was suspending action until the result of the Anglo-Dutch war should be seen.

His first audience took place on December 23, when the Court was at Upsala. In a large room, brilliantly lighted, he was admitted to the presence of the Queen, seated upon her crimson velvet chair of state, and surrounded by courtiers and household.[1]

[1] *Journal of the Swedish Embassy*, vol. i., pp. 231 *seq.*

"As soon as he came within this room he put off his hat"—Whitelocke writes in the third person throughout—"and then the Queen put off her cap, after the fashion of men, and came two or three steps forward upon the foot-carpet. This, and her being covered and rising from her seat, caused Whitelocke to know her to be the Queen, which otherwise had not been easy to be discerned, her habit being of plain grey stuff; her petticoat reached to the ground, over that a jacket such as men wear, of the same stuff, reaching to her knees; on her left side, tied with crimson ribbon, she wore the Order of Amaranta; her cuffs ruffled *à la mode*, no gorget or band, but a black scarf about her neck, tied with a black ribbon, as soldiers and mariners sometimes use to wear. Her hair was braided, and hung loose upon her head; she wore a black velvet cap lined with sables and turned up, after the fashion of the country, which she used to put off and on as men do their hats. Her countenance was sprightly, but somewhat pale; she had much of majesty in her demeanour, and though her person was of the smaller size, yet her mien and carriage was very noble."

His credentials presented, Whitelocke made a speech, to which Christina listened with attention, "and coming up close to him, by her looks and gestures (as was supposed) would have daunted him; but," adds the envoy grandiloquently, "those who have been conversant in the late great affairs in England are not so soon as others appalled with the presence of a young lady and her servants." Speeches were then made and compliments exchanged, Christina explaining that illness had caused her to wear the dress of her chamber rather than to defer the audience.

The interview was jealously watched by the ambassador from the Hague, who reported that it had

From the original painting.

COUNT TOTT.

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lasted above half an hour, and that the envoy had spoken so low that it was only possible to conclude, by "some of his words, taken by piece-meal," that he was offering a justification for the conduct of the English Parliament. Of the Queen's answer not a word was audible.[1]

Whitelocke's audience was the first of many. Though possessed of no brilliant gifts, he was painstaking and industrious, and was deeply impressed with the importance of his office and with the necessity of neglecting no available means of furthering the objects of his mission. To this end he was careful in the choice of his associates, establishing cordial relations with Count Tott, that "gallant young gentleman," cultivating the society of the graver councillors of the Queen, and going so far, on hearing that it was Oxenstiern's custom to adopt sons, as to request the honour of becoming one of them.

Amongst his fellow-ambassadors he gave the preference to Pimentelli, as being "a gentleman of excellent parts and ingenuity," and, what was perhaps more important, "in very great favour with the Queen." It was true that, before Whitelocke's arrival, Christina had been compelled to acknowledge that her marked liking for the Spaniard was so offensive both to her subjects and allies that prudence dictated his dismissal; but though Pimentelli bowed to her decision and obediently set sail, so violent and opportune a tempest arose as to drive him back upon the Swedish coast; whereupon, making no further sign of braving the elements, he returned to Court and remained there, lodged in the royal palace, for some six additional months.

If it was well to be upon friendly terms with those by whom the Queen was surrounded, it was recognised on all hands that it was with Christina herself that the

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. i., p. 652.

ultimate determination of questions of State and policy would lie, and Whitelocke was indefatigable in his efforts to gain her favour. Nor was he unsuccessful. Novelty was always welcome to Christina; and her love of information made her glad to avail herself of the opportunity of acquiring conversancy with English affairs. Whitelocke, for his part, was ready to play the part of mentor, whether in grammar or public business, practising, it would seem, a certain economy of truth in cases where diplomacy demanded it; since he informed her, amongst other things, that Cromwell, on the point of being made Protector, came of the family of a baron, and his wife the like.

It was Whitelocke's primary aim to conclude a treaty of amity with Sweden; it was also of the last importance to defeat the attempts made by Charles II. to enlist Christina's sympathy and obtain her help. In conversation with the envoy, the Queen alluded to a report which had reached England to the effect that the exile had made her an offer of marriage, admitting that letters had passed between her and the young King, and volunteering the assurance that she would never consent to the arrangement. Charles, she also told Whitelocke in confidence, had sent a letter, with the Order of the Garter, to the Prince Palatine, but the messenger having the wit to bring them to her first, she had not suffered the Order to be delivered to her cousin, and, having read the letter, had burnt it.

At times the conversation took a lighter turn, as when, on one occasion, it was interrupted by the appearance of an uninvited guest.

"What huge dog is this?" asked the Queen, breaking off an inquiry she had been making as to the invisible ink employed by the ambassador in his dispatches.

"It is an English mastiff," was the reply, "which

I brought with me, and it seems is broken loose and followed me even to this place."

"Is he gentle and well-conditioned?" questioned the Queen cautiously.

"The more courage they have the more gentle they are," answered Whitelocke. "This is both. Your Majesty may stroke him," proceeding, upon further inquiries, to inform Christina that one Mr. Peters—a minister and servant of the Parliament—had sent the dog as a present to the Queen, but that, considering it an act of presumption, the envoy had not thought fit to offer her the gift. Christina thought otherwise. The dog belonged to her, she said gaily, and she would have it. Thus encouraged, Whitelocke was emboldened to mention another gift, in the shape of a great English cheese, entrusted to him by the same donor, the Queen being pleased to accept all Mr. Peters's presents merrily and with expressions of contentment, though from so mean a hand.

All this was satisfactory enough; the winter, however, was passing and the particular business upon which Whitelocke had been sent did not make progress, Christina preferring the discussion of philosophy, diversions, and ballets to a serious consideration of the relations between the two countries. Yet she was lavish in promises, and treated him with confidence. A month after his first interview she made known to him her intention, again drawing towards a head, of relinquishing the crown. The conversation had turned upon Whitelocke's mission, Christina observing amicably that, in case he and the Chancellor failed to agree, the business must be referred to her, and he would find she was guided by honour and reason. After which, bringing her stool closer to his—the two were closeted in her bed-chamber—she told him, under seal of secrecy, and with a flattering show of a desire for his counsel and advice, of her determination to retire into private life.

Honestly taken aback by the announcement, the Englishman strove, by somewhat prolix arguments, to turn her from her purpose, asking how she could forsake a people who cherished so much affection for her. Christina answered with frankness, avowing that the motives dictating her decision were mixed. If love for her subjects was causing her to provide them with a better government than that of a woman, she did not deny that self-love had its share in leading her to please her own fancy by retirement. A lengthy discussion followed, Whitelocke's representations, as might have been foreseen, taking little effect upon Christina.

If she was to execute the purpose she had announced, it was plain that it behoved him the more to get his business satisfactorily settled. Many reasons conduced to make him anxious to conclude it. Besides others of a more public and political character, he was personally impatient to return to England, where a wife—his third—and thirteen children were awaiting him. For the present, there was no prospect of his speedy departure. Oxenstiern was prevented by illness from attending to business, and was ill replaced by his sons, less favourably disposed towards England than the Chancellor. The envoy himself contracted a feverish distemper and was confined to his room ; a visit from the Spanish and French Residents, who unluckily chanced to call at the same time, causing not a little embarrassment to their host, "much put to it to place them so in his chamber that neither might take offence ; which he did upon his bed, and himself sitting in a chair between them."

With his recovery his ineffectual interviews with Queen and ministers were resumed, Christina again assuring him that she herself would be judge at last, and he should not be unnecessarily delayed. Always ready to gratify the sententious Englishman by

flattering speeches, relations between them became so cordial that when, hearing she was ill, he sent his son to inquire after her, she had the lad brought to her bed-chamber and told him that she was now sick of no other disease but that for three whole days his father had not been with her. She studied English, too, under Whitelocke's instruction, and consulted the Embassy doctor on questions of health, propounding to him two questions: first, whether physicians knew anything by their art, or were guided by adventure and chance? and secondly—a less personal matter—whether good philosophers were good Christians?

The answers of the man of medicine are not recorded, but Whitelocke notes that they were full of ingenuity and learning, and had given the Queen more than ordinary satisfaction.

All this was very pleasant, and so were Christina's reiterated assurances that his business should have a speedy dispatch. Pastimes, too, were many and various. There was sledging to be had in the royal sledges, and entertainments at the Palace, upon one of which Christina, "being in a very good humour," presented Whitelocke to her friend Ebba Sparre, known as "la belle Comtesse," and told him to discover by discourse whether her inside was not as fair as she was without, giving him moreover her glove as a favour. Yet, in spite of all, the ambassador was growing more and more weary of his sojourn in foreign lands. In Sweden, its Protestantism notwithstanding, practices prevailed—such as Sunday entertainments and balls—abhorrent to his righteous soul. He was uneasy lest any members of his numerous retinue should be led astray, and, not content with the sermons preached by his chaplain, personally addressed and admonished his household as to their backslidings.

The moments for which he lived were those when,

turning from the recreation occupying her at the time, Christina would gratify him by giving a few minutes to business. Thus, whilst shooting at a mark, she introduced the subject of the proposed treaty, again promising that, so soon as the result of the negotiations pending between England and Holland should be known, he should have his answer, with her reasons full and frank. Tired as he was growing of speeches of this nature, he could do no less than answer, in courtier-like fashion, that he required no better assurance than the word of a Queen who dealt so like a Queen, adding that he himself would deal like a gentleman ; and so the matter rested.

In these fruitless interviews the winter had passed away. Though the intended abdication had not yet been made public, the secret was leaking out, and the approaching change in the Government was anxiously contemplated by foreigners and natives alike. The diplomatic body at Upsala was divided into parties, the English and Spanish envoys naturally combining against the French and Dutch. A letter addressed to his superiors by Beningen, the envoy from the Hague, had fallen into hands for which it was not intended ; but when Whitelocke complained of the language used in it, Pimentelli replied consolingly that such was the mode of Holland, adding that Beningen was no gentleman and ignorant of what belonged to matters of honour. The difficulties at Court were increased by the presence of a Scotch royalist, holding some temporary post in the Queen's household, who was so wanting in courtesy as to let the hanging of the royal apartment fall in Whitelock's face as he entered ; and though the Queen, hearing of the incident, called the culprit a sot and a fool, it was unpleasant for the representative of the Commonwealth to be exposed to this treatment. By this time—it was February 18—the ambassador's patience was wearing thin, and, unpropitiated by a

noble present of reindeer, he told Christina bluntly that his mission was making so little progress that he must take leave of her, and return whence he came; nor was it till she had repeated the usual promises that he consented to abandon his intention for a time.

The gentleman who had, as he protested unintentionally, dropped the hangings of the Queen's door in Whitelocke's face, was one Ballendin, sent by Charles II. to Sweden to endeavour to enlist the Queen's assistance on his behalf. The letter with which he returned to his master was not of a nature to encourage his hopes. "Monsieur mon Frère," wrote Christina, "the Chevalier de Balandin gave me the letter which you took the trouble to write to me, and performed the commission you had given him. He conducted himself as a man of honour, and displayed all the zeal and loyalty in your service that you could desire. I owe him this testimony, so that you may not impute to him the ill success of his mission. It is the fault of the times that your misfortunes are incurable, and I grieve that I can apply no remedy to them. You will doubtless have the kindness to permit your friends to take thought for their own interests when they can be of no use to you. I confess, with regret, that this is my care more than any other person's, and that I am unable to consent to the proposals you make without injury to a State whose interests must be dearer to me than any other consideration. I hope that time, which cures all ills, may put an end to your adversities, and may afford occasions for serving you without injury to obligations which alone govern me."

This explicit statement notwithstanding, Ballendin was not without hopes of obtaining private financial aid from Christina; and disappointment was great when it became known that she was abandoning her place at the head of the Government and was resigning the reins into the hands of a man from whom nothing of

the kind was to be expected by the errant representative of English royalty.[1]

If Whitelocke had small cause for uneasiness on the score of Christina's sympathy for Charles Stuart, he too must have begun to feel that the future relations of England and Sweden were less dependent upon the Queen and her caprices than upon the will of the sovereign who was shortly to occupy her throne; for her fixed determination to resign her place at the helm was daily becoming more clear.

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*.

CHAPTER IX

1654

Motives of Christina's abdication—Letter to Chanut—Christina and the Senate—She parts with her mother—Whitelocke in favour—Meets the Estates of the Realm—The ceremony of the abdication—Christina leaves Sweden.

IT is at no time an easy matter to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and when it comes to the ascription of motives, to the determination, at a distance of two centuries and a half, of the reasons dictating a given line of conduct, the difficulty is enhanced. Many and various are the explanations offered for Christina's abdication. Religion ; a longing for novelty ; a weariness of the routine of business and statecraft ; a craving for leisure to pursue the studies she loved ; a wish to play a striking and original part,—to these several causes has been attributed a step sufficiently remarkable, especially in a woman of no more than twenty-seven, with life before her, to excite the keenest curiosity and interest.

Most, if not all, of these reasons may have had a share in shaping her course. Yet it is in the nature of Christina herself and her temperament that the predominating motives are to be sought, rather than in her statements, though free from the intention to mislead, or in the one-sided assertions of partisans or enemies. To know what Christina was is to possess a key to her conduct that facts will fail to supply.

In the case of a woman conscious that the eyes of

the world were upon her it might have been expected that special difficulties would lie in the way of acquiring this knowledge. But with Christina these difficulties are minimised. The inordinately high estimate she entertained of herself, her virtues, her powers and her gifts, precluded any temptation to concealment or disguise. She fulfilled her personal ideal to her complete satisfaction, and was more than willing to display herself to the public. She represented her own standard of excellence. The incense offered to her from childhood upwards had co-operated with natural vanity to render her self-confidence invincible. If, therefore, she must be said to have acted a part it was unconsciously performed, and she was included in the deception.

The Baron de Bildt's masterly summary of her character, as he reads it at this period, lays much—to some it would seem too much—stress upon matters of health. Christina was, in his opinion, an *égoïste névropathe*. Overtaught in childhood, brain and nerves excited in youth by excess of application, bringing to all her avocations alike a strenuous and restless activity of mind, he seems to regard her as in some sense abnormal—"être énigmatique, complexe, et redoutable." Yet in his description there is little that, given the circumstances, would not naturally, almost inevitably, follow upon her position and training, coupled with the qualities she possessed. Eager for flattery and praise, proud of her intellectual and material superiority, sensible at one moment of the sweetness, at another of the bitterness, of power ; now intoxicated by greatness, now wearying of the burden it imposed ; cold, hard, devoid of tenderness or patriotism—such is the picture drawn by a writer who acquits her of many of the sins or foibles laid to her charge. There are those to whom his verdict will still seem harsh ; others, allowing it to be, on the whole, just, will

find in words of the same writer what may serve to temper and soften their condemnation. "Personne," he says, speaking of her childhood and youth, "personne ne lui a appris à aimer."[1] That lesson had been omitted from the long list of her studies. Self-centred, the world revolved around her. What she desired, to that she had a right. It is difficult to believe that she ever indulged a remorse or a repentance.

At the present moment the good she coveted was freedom—freedom from the fetters and trammels of her position, emancipation from duties hedging her in like prison walls. With that longing another mingled; and if the first alone would have sufficed to lead her to break the bonds that bound her, what might have been no more than an undisciplined act of revolt against the conditions of her life was in a measure lifted into another sphere by the genuine conviction that in the direction in which her desires pointed lay also a spiritual inheritance only to be obtained by the resignation of her birthright. The possibility had crossed her mind that possession of the two might be combined, that she might be permitted to conform in secret to the Catholic creed, whilst remaining in the eyes of the public a Lutheran; and she had put the question to the Roman authorities. It was at once answered in the negative.

"The crown must then be given up," was her reply.[2]

The inquiry implies that, had not the religious motive supplemented others, she might have hesitated to effect a breach with her country and her past. But it has already been made clear that the longing to escape had existed before religious complications had left her no alternative. In a letter presently to be quoted, it will be seen that she dated the first

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, p. 22.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

conception of her desire to relinquish the sceptre from some eight years before it was carried into effect ; and though it may then have been rather of the nature of a dream than of a practical possibility, she had shown, in 1651, that her purpose was by that time fully developed. If she yielded to the protests and entreaties of her subjects so far as to abandon it for the moment, it is likely that she secretly regarded the attainment of her liberty as postponed rather than finally renounced. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that, not more than a few weeks later, she took the step of sending Macedo, confessor to the Portuguese ambassador, to Rome, to request that qualified theologians should be forthwith dispatched for the purpose of discussing with her the claims of the Catholic Church.

Ranke may be right in suggesting that the mystery necessarily attaching to her communications with the two Jesuits who arrived, in answer to her appeal, in February 1652, added to their attraction. In Macedo's case, his conversations with the Queen had been carried on in the presence of his chief, ignorant of the Swedish language, the ambassador remaining under the impression that affairs of State furnished the topic ; and when the Roman delegates appeared at Stockholm it was in the guise of Italian nobles. In this character they were presented to the Queen. Rapidly forming her own conclusions, she inquired of one of them, as they were passing in to dinner, whether he did not bring her letters, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, enjoined upon him strict silence. Interviews and arguments followed, the hopes of the ecclesiastics being now raised, now dashed to the ground, as the Queen's mood varied ;[1] and though the result of the Jesuits' visit was inconclusive, it may fairly be assumed, from their account of it, that she

[1] Ranke's *History of the Popes*, vol. iii., p. 67.

had contemplated at that time the possibility of a step rendering abdication imperative.

In the two years that had since elapsed her sentiments had undergone a change; the hesitation and fluctuations marking her conduct were over, and it had become her fixed purpose to seek reconciliation with the Holy See. Nor is there any reason to discredit her distinct assertion that religion had played the most important part in ultimately deciding her course. When addressing herself to Almighty God in her fragment of autobiography, she rendered Him thanks that, having bestowed so much upon her, He had called her to the glory of sacrificing, for His sake, fortune, greatness, and glory. "And as I exist only because Thou art good, I owe Thee my respectful gratitude that Thou didst give me strength to make that great sacrifice."[1]

Such was the light in which Christina viewed her abdication; such was the light in which she desired that posterity should view it. But the motives contributing to make her desire three years earlier to resign the crown were still co-operating with religion, and a letter to Chanut, now minister at the Hague, presents a vivid picture of her state of mind at this crisis. The friendship between Christina and the French envoy had been close enough to warrant a letter of remonstrance from him when the rumour of her intended resignation of the crown reached his ears afresh; and in her reply the Queen opened her heart as to a friend, explaining her determination to one who would place the step she meant to take before the world in its true light.

"You know," she wrote, "that this idea has lasted long, and that only after eight years of consideration have I resolved upon its execution. Five years ago at least I communicated my determination to you. . . . During this long period nothing that has happened

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 5.

has caused me to change. All my actions have been directed to this aim; to this end they have been brought. . . . I am ready to finish my rôle, and to retire from the stage. I am not uneasy as to the *Plaudite*. I know that the scene in which I have borne my part has not been governed by the common theatrical rules. What is powerful, virile, and vigorous seldom finds favour. I permit each one to judge of it in his own way; I am unable to rob them of this liberty, nor would I do so were it in my power. I am aware that few will form a favourable judgment; and I am sure that you will be of that number. The world at large is ignorant of my reasons and my state of mind, since I have made them known only to you and to one other friend, who, like yourself, has a soul great and noble enough to judge of them. *Sufficit unus, sufficit nullus.* I despise the rest, and should do honour to the member of the company whom I considered ridiculous enough to serve for my diversion. Those who examine this action by the maxims commonly accepted by men will doubtless blame it. But I shall never take the trouble to make my apology to them. In the great leisure I am preparing for myself, I shall not ever be idle enough to recall them to my memory. I shall employ that leisure to examine into my past life, and to correct my errors without fear or repentance. What pleasure it will afford me to remember that I have rejoiced to do good to men, and that I have chastised without pity those who deserved it! . . . In my administration there is no matter for self-reproach. I have possessed without pomp, I relinquish with ease. After all this, have no fears for me. I am safe, and my weal is not in the power of fortune; whatever may come, I am happy. . . . Should Providence regulate my affairs, I submit to it with respect and resignation; should it leave me to direct my own conduct, I shall use

the faculties of soul and mind it has bestowed upon me to make myself happy. And my happiness will be so great that I shall be convinced nothing is to be feared from God or man. I shall use what remains to me of life to familiarise myself with these thoughts, to strengthen my soul, and to watch from the harbour the tempests of those who are storm-tossed by life because their minds have not been applied to these considerations. Is not my condition to be envied? Were my felicity known there would be too many to envy me." After which, the Queen proceeded to acknowledge her obligations to Chanut himself and to promise him her constant affection. "You will believe," she concluded, "that the strongest pledge I can give you is to say that I shall be always Christina."

Souvent femme varie. To be always Christina was not to be always the same. The Frenchman was too much of a courtier to point out that fact, and his reply was couched in the terms of fulsome flattery in vogue. Christina's letter is very characteristic of the writer, containing as it does the frank avowal of her conviction that she was playing a striking and startling part before a great audience unable for the most part to appreciate it, and it is a useful index to her state of mind at the time it was written. She was young enough to look forward to happiness as a right to be vindicated, a certainty to be grasped. Life lay before her, full of untested and dazzling possibilities. Content, secure, almost gay, she was launching her bark upon fresh seas with no doubts as to her power of piloting it. For what she was leaving behind there is singularly little trace of regret. Her estimate of Sweden may be guessed from the light congratulations she had addressed to the French Academician, Benserade, upon his being prevented from visiting a country where a mind as sensitive as his would have been *morfondu*, and which would

have sent him back to France with a spiritual chill. "What would you have seen in Sweden?" she pursued. "Our ice resembles yours, save that it lasts six months longer. Our summer, when it comes in fury, is so violent that the poor flowers tremble."[1] Nor was the intellectual atmosphere more to her taste. Before her lay novelty and freedom. A religion she disliked was to be abjured; distasteful duties were to be left behind; financial entanglements to be devolved upon others. The South—a land of sunshine and romance, was to be her home; Italy, France, with their art and culture, were to be explored, and she was impatient to be gone.

Before, however, her emancipation could be accomplished, certain formalities must be observed; and in February 1654 she had taken the initial step towards the realisation of her dreams by calling together the Senate at Upsala and making the explicit announcement of her intention of resigning the crown in favour of her cousin, the Prince of Sweden. Few amongst her hearers can have been unprepared for her declaration, but decency and propriety demanded that they should appear startled by it; and the silence that greeted her speech was followed by the expression of deep regret and the entreaty that the Queen would give the measure she contemplated more mature consideration. Christina replied with a flat refusal to admit delay, adding that nothing further remained to be done save to arrange for the meeting of the Estates of the Realm. Protests were scarcely more than a matter of form, and the Estates were convened for May.

The arrangements to be made were of a double character. The succession had to be formally made over to Charles Gustavus; whilst Christina's future was to be assured by the revenues assigned to her. Upon this last subject a certain amount of discussion

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 354.

took place. Both Senate and Estates were disposed to deal generously with the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, and in the end an income amounting to some million of francs—a large sum, the poverty of Sweden considered—was secured to her, derived from the revenues of provinces to be administered by her agents and over which she was to exercise some sort of limited sovereignty. Reserving to herself a position of absolute independence, she caused it to be definitely declared that she was exempt from all subjection or obedience, and responsible to God alone; retaining jurisdiction over the appanage assigned to her, although, with the exception of three or four districts, incapacitated from selling or alienating any of her domains. To the further stipulation, afterwards suggested, that she should continue to reside in the kingdom and spend her income there, she naturally refused her consent and it was not enforced.

The meeting of the Estates was fixed for May 2. Before that date nothing could be finally settled, but, looking cheerfully onward to the time of her release, Christina told Whitelocke that it was her intention to go and drink the waters at the Spa in the summer, "and if you will come to me in Pomerland," she added, "you shall be as welcome as any man living, and we will be merry together."

To be merry in Whitelocke's society would not, one imagines, be an altogether easy matter. Already he was counselling her to lose no time in withdrawing to Pomerania, her abdication accomplished, lest designs should be entertained against her liberty, "for, Madam, in this age," he sighed, "there be few persons to be trusted." There was no fear that Christina would linger as soon as she was free to depart. In the meantime she amused herself as best she might. With April it became necessary for Pimentelli to brave the seas again, carrying with him rich gifts, and leaving Christina

the less regretful at his departure by reason of the approach of her own.

In April she paid a visit to Nyköping, for the purpose of taking leave of her mother. In the presence of the Prince of Sweden and of her Court she made her farewell speech, asking pardon for any respect and care on her part lacking in the past. It had not, she explained, been owing to any absence of good will, but circumstances had not permitted that she should act differently. In the future it would be still less in her power to give the Queen-dowager any assistance. She must, however, find consolation in the fact that, if she was losing a daughter, she was gaining a son in the man who would soon be King. "Finally the Queen said adieu to the Queen her mother, with firmness and without weeping. It was not so with the Queen-mother, for she melted into tears. The whole Court was touched by this last farewell, and the Queen-mother weeping all night Christina was informed of it, and rising at once, went to her mother's bed to endeavour to console her. At five o'clock she set out for Stockholm, returning to Upsala on the morrow."[1] Thus separated, as it proved for ever the mother and daughter who had counted for so little in each other's lives.

All was arranged. After a final interview with the Prince she parted from him, according to a letter from the Hague, with the words, "God be with you. I will see you no more till such time as I shall say, Behold the King of Sweden."[2] Though never wavering in her purpose, a suggestion she made to Whitelocke seems to imply misgivings as to her future. The proposal she privately placed before the English envoy was that a secret article, of which only Cromwell, herself, and Whitelocke were to be cognisant, should be

[1] *Mémoires de Chanut*, t. i., pp. 356, 357
[2] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. ii., p. 192.

added to the treaty on the point of being concluded, to the effect that, in the event of the Swedish Government failing to carry out its obligations towards her, England should be discharged from its engagements. The English diplomatist, much embarrassed by the suggestion of this singular expedient for enforcing good faith upon the Queen's successor, took refuge in explaining that he was in no way empowered to consent to the insertion of the desired clause, and in the counter-proposal that he should be made the bearer of a letter to the Protector, enjoining upon him care for Christina's interests. To this she agreed. But her desire to obtain additional guarantees for her future welfare points to some disquietude, which was to prove not unjustified, on the subject.

With Whitelocke, notwithstanding his inability to comply with her request, she continued on the most friendly terms, and two or three days before the actual signature of the treaty he presented her with an English Bible, richly bound, exhorting her to read it and to compare it with the Scripture in other languages —a practice which would greatly assist her in her study of the English tongue. So reiterated were his injunctions to make use of his gift that Christina began to suspect some hidden motive.

"I doubt," she observed, "you have an ill opinion of me, that you so earnestly persuade me to this, as if you thought me too backward in it."

Though disclaiming any special significance to be attached to his admonitions, Whitelocke did not allow the opportunity to slip, "and spake the more because he found the Queen more inclined to it than he had perceived her to be at other times."

On April 28 the signature of the treaty took place and the envoy's business was at length brought to a successful end. Full of rejoicing, both at its conclusion and at his approaching release, he carried out his

national custom by inviting the Queen, on May-Day, to a special entertainment, including a thoroughly English collation, of which each separate item was carefully enumerated in his journal, the satisfaction of his royal guest being also noted, with the fact that she was said to have eaten and drunk more than in three or four days at her own table. "Amongst other frolics," she had had her ladies taught the English salutation, and "her discourse was all of mirth and drollery, wherein Whitelocke"—poor laborious, painstaking Whitelocke—"endeavoured to answer her."

Favour at Court was not without its drawbacks, and when, at a wedding ten days later, Christina desired the ambassador to lead her out in a dance the unfortunate statesman would willingly have declined the privilege, fearing that he would not only dishonour her Majesty but shame himself by the performance. The Queen, however, was not to be denied, her reasons being made clear when the dance was at an end.

"Par Dieu," she exclaimed, "these Hollanders are lying fellows!" They had told her that all the English *noblesse* were royalist, and not a gentleman belonged to the Parliamentary party. She had therefore devised a test. A man who could dance was a gentleman; one who could not was unworthy of the name. "Now I thought to try you, and to shame you if you could not dance, but I see that you are a gentleman and have been bred a gentleman."

After pleasure, business. On the very day after the wedding festivity, Christina met the Estates of the Realm for the purpose of making the formal announcement of her intention of resigning the crown in favour of her cousin. It would have belonged by right and custom to the Chancellor to declare her determination; but, as the Queen afterwards explained to Whitelocke, old Oxenstiern had desired at the last

moment to be excused. He had taken his oath to her father, he said, to do his utmost to keep the crown upon her head, and therefore could not act the part she desired. Under these circumstances, "rather than the Assembly should be put off and nothing done," said the Queen, "I plucked up my spirits the best I could, and spake to them on the sudden as you heard, though much to my disadvantage."

At all events, she made the matter clear. She was irrevocably determined to lay down the burden of government; so she told her subjects in plain terms. As before, each order made its ineffectual protest, clergy, nobility, and burgesses in turn striving to move her from her purpose. Lastly came the Marshal of the Order of Peasants.

"O Lord God, Madam," he said, stepping forth in his clouted shoon and all other habits answerable,[1] "what do you mean to do? It troubles us to hear you speak of forsaking those that love you so well as we do," begging her to reconsider the matter and to continue the fore-horse as long as she lived.

"When the boor had ended his speech," wrote Whitelocke, who witnessed the scene, "he waddled up to the Queen without any ceremony, took her by the hand and shook it heartily, and kissed it two or three times; then, turning his back to her, he pulled out of his pocket a foul handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes."

It was not to be expected that, at this stage, tears and supplications would take effect upon Christina. Should a second crown be offered her, she said, she would not consent to administer the Government for a moment beyond the time she had fixed; and the Estates were constrained to bow to her will and to ratify the settlement agreed upon by the Senate. Her attempt to have Count Tott, who had royal blood in his veins,

[1] *Swedish Embassy*, vol. ii., p. 223.

declared successor to Charles Gustavus,[1] in case of her cousin's death childless, failed; and she was likewise compelled to safeguard the kingdom from future complications by making her abdication final and absolute, including in it the disinheriting of any children to whom she might subsequently give birth.

The financial and political situation having been put on a satisfactory footing, it remained for Christina to complete the act of abdication necessary to place Charles Gustavus on the throne and to set her free. It also remained for her to conciliate the power, Spain, to whose dominions she intended to retire.

To this last matter she turned her attention during the few days that were to elapse before she surrendered into other hands the reins of government. On her own initiative and without taking counsel with officers of State or Senate, she wrote a letter to the Portuguese envoy, informing him that he had no longer any diplomatic position, as she had determined not to recognise his master, the Duke of Braganza, as King of Portugal—that title belonging to Philip, King of Spain, and the Duke being no more than a usurper. As such, she added, he would also be treated by her successor.

Having thus paved the way for her cordial reception in the Low Countries, she proceeded to divest herself of crown and sceptre. At seven o'clock, on the morning of June 6, the final scene opened. Before the assembled Senate, and in her presence and that of her cousin, the Act of Abdication was read; whilst a second was recited, assuring her of the rights and revenues she was to retain. The great officers of State then vested her in the royal robes, placed the crown upon her head, and, with all the insignia of the sovereignty she was resigning, she entered the great hall where the Orders of the Realm, the foreign envoys,

[1] *Life of Carolus Gustavus*, p. 57.

From the original painting.

CHARLES GUSTAVUS (CHARLES X.), KING OF SWEDEN.

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and the ladies of the Court were assembled ; the people were formally released from their oath of allegiance and the emblems of royalty were laid aside. Then, dressed in white, she stood before the audience and made her final oration—which, lasting nearly half an hour, summarised the events of her reign—before presenting to them the man she had chosen to occupy her place. Other formalities and speeches followed, and the lengthy ceremonial ended, between four and five in the afternoon, with the coronation of the new King, Charles Gustavus.

That very night Christina quitted Upsala. It was raining heavily, but, though entreated to delay her departure, she refused.

"How can you wish me," she asked, "to remain here, where so short a time ago I reigned as sovereign, and where I should see another exercising all power?"

If the words point to a touch of late regret it is the sole indication of any sentiment of the kind. She was in haste to be gone. It is again characteristic of the woman that, between the day of her abdication and that on which she left Sweden, she found time to announce the event in an autograph letter to the Prince de Condé, still the object of her admiration, and to claim his approval for what she had done. "In my changed fortunes and condition," she wrote, "I wish to protest to you that, whatever alteration time may have worked in our fortunes, I shall ever preserve the sentiments due to your merit. Your approbation is my greatest glory, and I hold myself to be as much honoured by your esteem as by the crown I have worn. If, having laid it down, you should consider me less worthy of that esteem, I will confess that the repose I have so greatly desired will have cost me dear. Nevertheless, I shall not regret having purchased it at that price, nor will I ever blacken an action which has seemed to me so fair by a base repentance. Whatever

may be your sentiments on this subject, I shall always retain for you the esteem you deserve so well, and should you condemn this action I can only say, in excuse, that I should not have relinquished what fortune had bestowed upon me had I believed it necessary to my happiness, and that, had I been as certain of success or of dying in so exalted an enterprise as the great Prince de Condé, I should doubtless have aspired to the empire of the world."

A fortnight after the ceremony at Upsala she had set out to seek her fortune in foreign lands.

It had been the desire of the new King that her departure should take place with all the form and ceremony due to her rank ; and, understanding that she intended to go by sea to Germany, twelve battle-ships had been fitted out to serve as her escort. But it was not Christina's purpose thus to inaugurate her escape from the burden of sovereignty, and, disregarding the preparations which had been made, she started on her travels by way of Denmark, assuming, in order the better to preserve her incognito, the character of the Comte de Dohna's son and wearing man's apparel. She was not, however, to be permitted in this manner to elude observation, and it is related, truly or falsely, that the Queen of Denmark, meeting her on her own ground, adopted the dress of a maid-servant, and, waiting at table at the inn where Christina lodged, had the advantage of hearing the traveller's frank opinion of her husband. The matter having come to Christina's ears, she was at first somewhat disconcerted, but promptly recovered herself. What had befallen the Queen befell most curious people, she remarked easily ; they often made disagreeable discoveries. Not possessing the gift of divination, she would not have thought of looking for her under the unworthy garb of a *servante de cabaret.*

Arrived at the Swedish frontier, where a narrow

stream marked the boundary line of the two kingdoms, it is again related—Chanut is the authority for the story—that, descending from her carriage, Christina sprang gaily across it.

"At length I am free, and out of Sweden," she said, "whither I hope never to return."

In this manner the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus took leave of her fatherland.

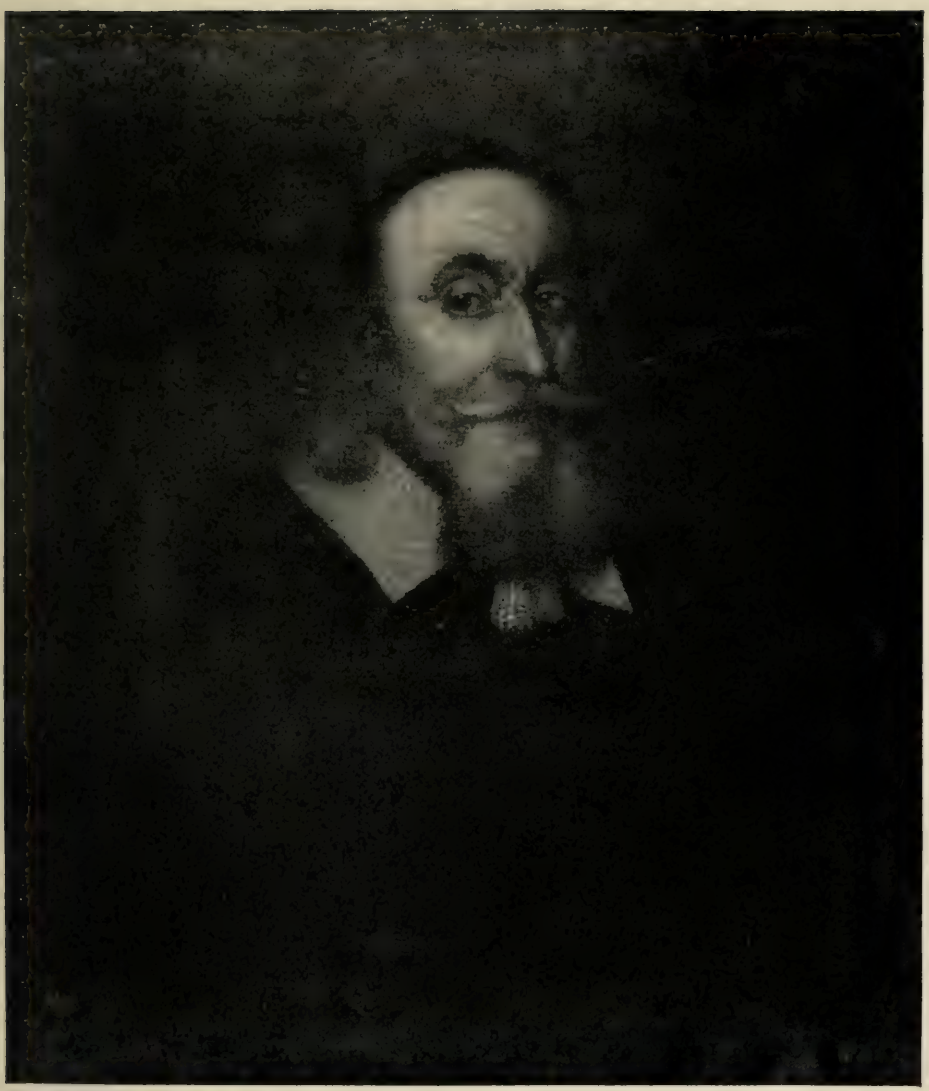
CHAPTER X

1654–5

Christina's wanderings and disguises—Public curiosity concerning her —At Hamburg—And Antwerp—Swedish disapproval—Quarrel with Chanut.

THE lives of some men and women are so ordered that the motion of the current by which they are carried onward is scarcely felt ; the hands of the watch creep smoothly and evenly on, and it is difficult to detect their advance. Youth succeeds childhood, middle-age youth, and old age may be upon them, and they will have experienced no jarring shocks of transition. Stages and phases of existence have followed one another, and the person principally concerned may only become dimly aware, as he takes stock from time to time of the country through which he is passing, that it is no longer the same. In other cases so sharp a line divides one chapter of life from another that the individuality of the actor in the story is the sole connecting link. Background, fellow-players, conditions of life—all are changed in the twinkling of an eye, as if the great scene-shifter, Time, had suddenly resolved upon a *coup de main* and had effected an instantaneous transformation.

But few transformations can be so complete as in the case of a woman who yesterday was exercising a power that came near to being absolute, and in the course of a few hours, without a struggle and by her own will, had become a simple, private individual, discharged



From the original painting.

AXEL OXENSTIERN, CHANCELLOR.

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from the obligations and duties of sovereignty, stripped of its privileges and rights, and free to shape and mould her future course according to the dictates of her phantasy.

There is a strange and melancholy fact to be taken into account when considering the circumstances attending Christina's new departure—a fact which, self-evident as it is, might be overlooked. When she made her joyous entry upon a world full of hopes and possibilities, she was leaving behind, not only the weary routine of office, not only the pomp and greatness of which she had tired, but every natural tie, and all the affection —save that of a few foreigners—she had ever known. Accompanied by a handful of Swedes, soon to be discarded, she was setting out alone, and without any intention of return, upon her voyage of discovery, her quest after fortune. Nor does that fact appear so much as to have been present to her mind, or to have weighed an iota in the balances. The explanation lies, once more, in the words "personne ne lui a appris à aimer."

Upon her parting with two of those, by blood or circumstances, nearest to her in her former life, death was soon to set the seal. Only a few weeks after her abdication the old Chancellor, Oxenstiern, to whom it had been so severe a blow, passed away, her name almost the last upon his lips. Asking for news of the Queen, he observed that he had foretold to her that she would repent of what she was doing. "Yet—yet," he added with a deep sigh, "she is nevertheless the daughter of Gustavus the Great."

Not a year later Marie-Eleonore died, in the land she had never loved and where she had been left by her only child to end her days alone. On receiving the news Christina, it is said, "retired into the country and deprived herself, during three weeks, of all company" —not an over-long period to be devoted to mourning.

It was in the March of 1655 that the Queen-mother died. By that time her daughter had had close upon nine months' experience of her new existence. Never was a retirement into private life attended with more publicity. The eyes of Europe were upon her ; her abdication was a nine-days' wonder. All were eager to learn the facts, and to place their own interpretation upon them. Into the theories thus evolved, it is not necessary to enter. If by some spectators Christina's action was explained as an unexampled triumph of disinterested self-sacrifice, others viewed it as a mode of escape from distasteful duties, and a result of the desire to enter upon a more congenial manner of life. To the first she had become, as Madame de Longueville wrote to Bourdelot, "by resigning a crown, worthy of wearing all crowns ; in ceasing to rule over her subjects, worthy of ruling the world." Should her conversion follow upon her abdication, never would a creature have been invested with so dazzling a glory ; she would become a saint as well as a heroine.[1]

Christina's conversion was not far off. Her saint-hood was a different matter. In the meantime, what was certain was that she had become "a Lady Errant, seeking adventure in strange lands."[2] Every one was curious to learn what they could about the heroine of the hour, whose name was in all men's mouths. "Letters of intelligence" chronicled, truly or falsely, her movements ; private accounts of her were eagerly sought. "J'ay apris," wrote Henrietta Maria a little later to her son, "que vous avez veu la Reyne de Suède. Je vous prie de me mander sy vous trouvez que tout ce que l'on dit est vray, tant de sa personne que de son humeur. Je seray fort ayse de le savoir."[3] From Amsterdam some one wrote that she was counted by those about her person a very atheist, and the writer

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 499. [2] *A Brief Relation*, etc.
[3] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. i., p. 676.

was longing to hear Whitelocke's opinion on the subject.[1] Stories of her sayings and doings were handed about, sometimes little to her advantage, as when it was reported that she had asked the Dutch envoy at Stockholm whether he thought it strange to cut off the King of England's head ; and that when he had replied that he did think it very strange, she had answered no, for that they had cut him off a member wherewith he served himself very little or very ill.[2] On the other hand, a rumour was abroad that she was going to Spain to meet the dead man's son, was thinking of him as a husband, and had been heard to call him the King of Great Britain. A match with the King of the Romans was also mentioned as possible, and the closeness of her relations with Spain gave rise to a wild report that, her contemplated visit to Italy paid, she was to come back as governor to the Low Countries.

To return to her present travels; it was stated by Vries, Dutch Resident, that she had arrived at Helsingor dressed like a man, and, attended by some dozen persons, had entered the hostelry booted and carrying a gun upon her shoulder.[3] A few days later she had reached Hamburg, still "habited like a cavalier, with a red scarf, after the Spanish mode ;" where, declining the lodging prepared for her by the magistrates of the town, she took up her residence at the house of the Jew Texeira, to whom Pimentelli had introduced her ; replying to protests as to his race by pointing out that our Lord "had all His life conversed with Jews, that Himself was come of their seed, and that He had preferred their company to the company of all other nations."[4]

Though she was nominally incognito, and had been in the town some hours before her presence became

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. i., p. 676.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 451.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 404.
[4] *A Brief Relation*, etc.

publicly known, all persons of note in the neighbourhood came to visit her, anxious to do honour to the crownless Queen. She did not, however, linger long in the German city with which she was to become only too well acquainted at a later date; quitting it without leave taken of magistrates or other dignitaries of the town, at dawn of day and at the close of an entertainment given by the Landgrave of Hesse: "On Sunday last," records an English resident, "the Queen of Sweden, with all the present Dukes and Princes, went out to Wandsbeck, half a mile from the city, where they continued till one o'clock at night, and then came back again to the city. The chief burgomaster, personally attending in the main guard, caused the gates to be opened for her Majesty, who at four o'clock the same morning went out again and left the city very privately, attended only by Grave Steinberger, one of her greatest favourites, and his lady, besides the rich Jew's eldest son where she lodged." [1]

The Queen's arrival at Antwerp, which was to be her headquarters for the present, took place towards the middle of August, when a news-letter mentioned that she had made her entrance in the disguise of a page to one of her servants—probably Steinberg—a proceeding stigmatised by the writer as "a fantastic trick." [2] Though she now resumed her ordinary apparel, discarded her incognito, and admitted all who desired to her presence, it seems that she was not even yet prepared to curb her restless humour, and can scarcely have been more than a week or two in Antwerp when a flying visit to Brussels, once more in some sort of disguise, is reported; a letter of intelligence stating that she had arrived there, more man-like than woman, with a train of two earls, two men-servants and one woman." The writer could tell no more of her plans, "her ways being inscrut-

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. ii., p. 469. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 499.

able." [1] Another letter related that, coming unknown, no one had met her save Pimentelli's wife, at whose house she had taken up her lodging, visiting the Palais Royal and all places of curiosity, and playing daily at the Mall till nine in the morning.[2]

At Antwerp she received a visit from Chanut, who afterwards gave an account of it to Bordeaux, French ambassador in England, the latter having written in a somewhat equivocal tone of the step taken by the Queen, and added a request for information as to her present manner of life. "Since you employed all your rhetoric," he told Chanut, "to dissuade her from stripping herself of her crown, you may now furnish her with more to justify her retreat, and likewise to dissipate the vexation which she may have already conceived from doing as she hath done. You will very much oblige me to send the picture of her humour, that I may have wherewithal to encounter the opinions of many who do qualify her present conduct in the title of madness; that is, without doubt, because she is above their reach, and that they are not capable of these extraordinary actions." [3]

In Chanut's reply he stated that, having spent three or four days at Antwerp, he found that Christina's peculiarities had been exaggerated, that her manner of life was less singular, her ideas less destitute of reason and good sense than was reported. Her habit of advancing paradoxes and maintaining them by argument, was, he confessed, liable to misapprehension. In his opinion, it was done merely to know the views and to test the intelligence of her guests, and to supply herself with amusement.[4]

Meantime the disapproval aroused in Sweden by the accounts that reached it of the Queen's conduct on her wanderings, seemed likely to take a practical

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. ii., p. 499.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 559.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 549.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 635.

and inconvenient form. The figure of its late sovereign as she traversed foreign lands in masculine attire and in search of adventure, was in no wise calculated to commend itself to her sober-minded and eminently respectable countrymen; whilst the suspicion, gradually gaining ground, of her intention of seeking reconciliation with the ancient Church exposed her to still harsher criticism. Tales no doubt reached Sweden of incidents, trifling enough, but discrediting her at home. At Hamburg it was reported that, though acknowledging a sermon preached in her honour by the gift of a gold chain, a copy of Virgil had been found in the seat in which she had listened to the preacher; and that when the volume had been returned to her she received it with a smile. She was further charged with lax ideas upon questions of morals, and was quoted as having commended the declaration of the dying Brutus that virtue was no more than a name and a chimera. Worse than all, it was reported that a boy-traveller, who was in truth no less a person than the daughter of the great Gustavus, had visited the Jesuits' College at Munster, had made herself known to the fathers, assisted at divine service in their chapel, and presented a hundred ducats to their house.

These tales, true or false, finding their way to Sweden, gave ample occasion for unfavourable comment. A letter, too, had reached the new King, and, couched in enigmatical language, gave rise in him to anxious thought.

Begging her cousin to keep his word, and to remember his promises with regard to her income and maintenance, Christina added her conviction that little would be known in Sweden either of what she did or what she became; adding, what might have seemed a superfluous pledge, that, whatever might betide her, she would never act in a manner detrimental to the interests of that country.

The unsolicited promise was enough in itself to rouse suspicion. Regarded in conjunction with Christina's well-known friendship for Spain and for the Emperor, and coupled with her Romish proclivities, it gave her cousin serious cause for reflection. He was anxious to remain faithful to his pledges, but it was easy to foresee that, in the face of the growing irritation of the country, to do so might not continue an easy matter. As reports concerning their late Queen reached the ears of the people, it was freely asserted by the clergy and others that, should they prove well founded, the nation would be relieved from the necessity of carrying out the stipulations made with regard to her maintenance. The question was brought to a head by a petition presented by the Senate, now taking open cognisance of the matter, begging that a member of their body should be sent to the Queen to endeavour to dissuade her from the step it was confidently believed she was about to take, and to induce her to return to her native land. They further expressed their opinion that, should she prove obdurate, they would lay themselves open to no reproach were the support she drew from Sweden withdrawn from a Queen leading a life so little in accord either with her birth or with the maxims of her country.

The King having declined to move in the matter personally, Count Tott was in the end dispatched by the Senate as their mouthpiece—the messenger chosen being no doubt the one whose influence over Christina would have most effect. Besides being charged with the remonstrances of the Senate, he was the bearer of letters from the King to various princes and rulers, including the Kings of France and Spain, informing them that honours paid to the Queen would be regarded by him as rendered to himself.

Charles Gustavus doubtless meant well; but to take his cousin, in some sort, under his protection, and to

solicit, as a favour, the good will of his fellow sovereigns on her behalf, was to mark too distinctly the change in her circumstances and position ; and it was not unnatural that Christina declined to have the letters presented, observing that she flattered herself that her own merits and the glory attaching to her reign would assure her a welcome wherever she might go. To the Senate she replied by a courteous acknowledgment of their solicitude, adding, however, that, all being well with Sweden under the wise government of the King, she failed to see in what she could be of use should she return thither, and that she hoped no one would grudge her the liberty she had acquired at the price of a crown.

In the meantime, awaiting at Antwerp the moment when she could carry out her purpose of going south, Christina was occupying the time by a quarrel with her old friend Chanut, now French minister at the Hague. On her expressing a desire to see him, he had obtained a safe-conduct enabling him to pay her the visit of which he had given Bordeaux an account, with no other object than that of renewing their former acquaintance. To his dismay he found that a political significance had been attached to the step, and that it was currently reported that he had sought the Queen in order to induce her to use her influence with Spain in the interests of peace. To put an end to a rumour so damaging to his master, Chanut wrote to entreat Christina to make a declaration that his visit had been merely one of courtesy and respect.

The request was certainly justified by the circumstances ; but, though not declining to accede to it, the Queen made her disavowal in terms so hostile and discourteous as to accentuate the change that had taken place in her sentiments towards France. All the envoy's letter contained, wrote Christina in allusion to the false reports of which he complained, was without

any foundation: "As to the Spaniards, I can assure you they are well informed as to the interests of those who prevent peace; and that, far from boasting of being solicited to make it, they are of opinion that it was never less desired in France. However that may be, I do not think that they will be frightened by *fanfaronnades* or deceived by *finesses*. They desire peace, but without impatience, and are possibly waiting to make it till France shall become more modest. . . ."

When this was the tone adopted by Christina it was perhaps not strange that Chanut should have administered a rebuke, veiled in the language of a courtier. Had he imagined, he replied, that his request would have roused the Queen to the degree of anger she displayed, his profound respect for her would have prevented him from drawing forth explanations thus made. He would go so far as to say that it would have been better to allow the world to suppose that the King of France was seeking for peace than to have given occasion for Christina to treat of such matters in terms that were not in use even between enemies.

Regarding Christina's diatribe as, what in truth it was, the reflection of a mood dominated by the enemies of France, Chanut's master, Mazarin, desired diplomatically to leave a door open for reconciliation: "Chanut will have sent you a copy of the answer he made to the letter, or rather the invective, of the Queen against France," he wrote to his agent at the Swedish Court. "When you impart it to the King be careful to separate her person, to which we always pay much respect, from what the Spaniards have caused her to do."[1] Her present mood past, she would, in the Cardinal's opinion, herself disavow it. The Cardinal was right.

[1] *Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin*, t. vi., p. 424.

CHAPTER XI

1655

Christina enters the Catholic Church—The affair kept secret—At Brussels—Meeting with Condé—Charles X.'s marriage—Christina starts on the way to Rome.

WHILST enjoying her initiation into a new mode of existence, Christina had not lost sight of the step she had so long contemplated, and was preparing to make her formal, though secret, submission to the Church of Rome. All having been made ready for her public reception at Brussels, the Archduke Leopold visited Antwerp, and invited her to repair to that city. Thither her old friend and counsellor, Pimentelli, having returned from Spain for the purpose, conducted her on December 23. On the evening of the day after, she made her confession of faith in the presence of the Archduke and four or five other chosen witnesses, Pimentelli being one. The event, secret though it was ostensibly to be kept, was celebrated by salvos from all the artillery of the city.

For the present it was important that the event should remain unknown, or at least unacknowledged, in Sweden. Notwithstanding the fears and misgivings there entertained, it was impossible to act upon mere suspicion ; and Christina and her advisers were anxious that, before suspicion was converted into certainty, her financial affairs should be put upon a more satisfactory footing than at present, and that the revenue she drew from the provinces charged with her support should

be commuted into a capital sum, invested in foreign securities, thus rendering her independent of the disapproval or resentment of her countrymen.

She therefore remained at Brussels, her contemplated visit to Rome being discouraged by the Vatican until she could throw off the Lutheranism still clinging to her as a disguise and present herself to the Pope in her true character of a convert.

Though she was doubtless eager to proceed on her way south, she had nothing to complain of in the entertainment given her in her present place of abode. All vied with each other to do honour to the guest. She was lodged at the archducal palace, the Archduke surrendering to her the best apartments in it, and pleasure and amusement were the order of the day. Mazarin, ignoring his just cause of displeasure, had dispatched from Paris a troop of comedians to minister to her diversion, and Spanish, French, and Italian plays were nightly performed. To this period probably belongs a characteristic letter addressed by her to that same Bishop Godeau who had boldly invited her at an earlier date to join the Catholic Church.

"What will you now say of Christina?" she wrote. "Turn my fickleness and my sentiments into ridicule as much as you please; you will have no more reason than I. When you wrote to invite me to embrace the Catholic religion, I took up arms against your indiscreet zeal, and against those who, like you, have all the foolish madness of proselytism. The same motives did not exist, and I had as many reasons for avoiding it as I have, perhaps, at present for changing. Do not believe it is by persuasion or by instigation. But from what motive it is you will take long to divine, and I give you leave to guess it if you can. The cause of the striking contradictions to be found in persons of my rank should not always be sought. Your labour would be vain, for it is so common for us *grosses têtes*

to commit great follies that people should never be grateful for the good we sometimes do by accident. . . . Prepare to laugh. Other follies are in my head. The least is to see the Pope. Then I shall make a pilgrimage to Loretto and to Venice during the next sacred carnival. Imitate me, and you will do well. Let us rejoice in this lower world, for we know not yet what is done in the other." [1]

The authenticity of the letter is doubtful, but the tone, half of bravado, half of boastful self-confidence, is very like Christina, full at this time of the step she was taking, and of the impression it would create. What the saintly Bishop to whom it was addressed thought of it does not appear. At Brussels she made the personal acquaintance of another of her former correspondents, and, brought face to face with the Prince de Condé, so long her hero and champion, she was afforded the opportunity of comparing her conception of him with reality. The meeting was, as might have been anticipated, a failure. Each had formed a highly coloured image of the other. Condé's exploits in the field had fired the imagination of the great soldier's daughter, and in the Prince's eyes the figure of the Queen was surrounded by a halo of romance. Where, he had asked with a touch of rhetoric when the meeting was in prospect, where was she who had resigned with so much ease what others strove after all their lives in vain? When he found her disappointment was the result.

Even before they met his pride had received a shock in learning that, notwithstanding her admiration for his renown, she was sufficiently alive to practical issues as to refuse to admit the claim of a refugee, in arms against his country, to be received on equal terms with the Archduke Leopold, Governor-General of the Low Countries, with whom it was of the utmost

[1] Lacombe, *Lettres secrètes*, pp. 75–76.

importance to her to keep on good terms ; and the question of etiquette interposed a real difficulty in the way of their meeting. But though declining to waive the point of precedence, Condé was too impatient to satisfy his curiosity to submit to delay ; and, evading the questions raised by a formal visit, is said by the Comtesse d'Aulnoy to have introduced himself incognito into Christina's presence, amidst a throng of courtiers.

Divining the character of her unknown guest, through his likeness to his portrait or by other means, his hostess approached him with marked courtesy. Condé was not to be thus propitiated. "He at once retired," proceeds the narrative, "she following him to bring him back. Thereupon he stopped, saying only these words : *Ou tout, ou rien*," signifying, it would seem, that, were he not to be received on equal terms with the Archduke, he would accept no other favour.

Where both parties are anxious to find a way out of a dilemma, it can scarcely fail to be discovered, and in the end an informal interview, unsubjected to the rules of etiquette, was arranged, when the two were afforded an opportunity of transforming an imaginative adoration into a practical acquaintance.

"Who would have imagined, my cousin," observed the Queen, "that we should have met under our present conditions ?"

Uncrowned Queen ; rebel Prince. It was not thus that, in their dreams, they had pictured their meeting. And now that it had taken place it did not correspond to their anticipations. As they walked in the Mall of the park at Brussels, they are said to have conversed "avec beaucoup d'honnêteté et beaucoup de froideur." Condé, Madame de Longueville's brother, Madame de Châtillon's friend, was likely to be critical, and Christina's original, boyish charm—it will be seen that Mademoiselle likened her to a *joli petit garçon*—may

not have appealed to him ; whilst the consciousness of disappointment on his part would have damped the Queen's spirits. Two years afterwards, to Condé's cousin and ally, la Grande Mademoiselle, she complained of his conduct. If he still remained in her eyes "the greatest man in the world," mischief-makers had been at work, and she had been told that he had scoffed at her at Brussels and had spoken offensively. She hoped it had been done by his servants, and not by himself; but that he had permitted it was bad enough.[1] In a letter to Ebba Sparre—her solitary friend amongst women—she confessed that she was not *bien* with the Prince de Condé. All else was well.

"My happiness would be second to none," she wrote, "could it be shared with you, and were you witness of my felicity. If I could have the joy of seeing you, I swear that I should be worthy of the envy of the gods. . . . Keep me, at least, in your dear remembrance, and let not the sweetness of the happiness I am enjoying be troubled by an unjust forgetfulness of the person in the world who most honours you. . . . I forgot to tell you that I am perfectly well, that I am the object of a thousand attentions here, and am on good terms with all the world, save the Prince de Condé, whom I see only at the play or at Court. My occupations are to eat well, sleep well, study a little, talk, laugh, witness French, Italian, and Spanish comedies, and pass the time agreeably. Lastly, I hear no more sermons ; I despise orators, in accordance with the saying of Solomon that all is folly, for every one should live content, eating, drinking, and singing."[2]

Was the mood of boisterous hilarity real or assumed, and was the expression of it due to a desire to make those she had left behind in Sweden certain that she

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. ii., p. 462.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 475.

did not regret what she had done? It is impossible to tell. But the fact that she was "perfectly well" might have accounted for part of her good spirits. When, amongst other old acquaintances, Bourdelot came to pay his respects to his former patient, it is recorded by Vossius that she dismissed him, saying she had no further need of a doctor.

On the other hand, she begged Ménage, with whom she was acquainted only by reputation, to meet her in Flanders, urging that, having herself come most of the way, the affection she bore him deserved that he should come the rest of it. Ménage, however, took counsel with Chapelain, and, finding him of opinion that the Queen was so much engrossed by Pimentelli that she would lack time to bestow upon her visitor should he respond to her invitation, he decided not to accept it.[1]

Independently of Pimentelli, it may be that Christina would not have had overmuch leisure for literary discourse. The gaiety and the excitement caused by her sense of newly acquired freedom would seem to have taken possession of the emancipated Queen, and though there is no evidence that the life she was leading was attended by any scandal, tales of her high spirits, exaggerated and misrepresented, were liable to be interpreted to her disadvantage. On the whole, Christina was indifferent to such matters. In her letter to the Comtesse Sparre she had sent kindly messages, not only to her friends, but to those who had no wish to be her friends. "I pardon them with all my heart—also I find myself none the worse for it." Yet there were times when the thought that she was discredited in the eyes of her countrymen may have caused her a pang; and not the apprehension of financial peril alone, but a genuine desire for rehabilitation may have dictated the letters to the King in which she dwelt upon her love for the land of her birth, and her desire

[1] *Ménagiana*, t. ii., pp. 219, 200.

to serve at all times its interests. The absence of a former ruler was better for Sweden than her presence ; should it ever be otherwise she would be ready to return. To Count Brahe, first Senator, she wrote in terms of strong affection, as to the single friend of all she had left behind who had kept her in remembrance, begging him to assure the King, his colleagues, and all Sweden of her passionate desire for their welfare. "I shall preserve as long as I live the love and respect I have for them, and, whatever may be said or done by those who wish me ill, . . . I would rather lose my life than become guilty towards them even by a thought." Entering at length into her reasons for believing it best to remain at a distance, she entreated the Count not to imagine that her absence was due to any regret at seeing another in her place. On the contrary, the sole drawback of her present happy condition was that she was deprived of the pleasure of contemplating at close quarters the single action which had caused her inconceivable satisfaction.

One event had taken place in Sweden since her departure, regarded by her, to judge from her comments upon it, with mixed feelings. This was the marriage of the King to the daughter of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp. It is said that, in the selection of a wife, he had acted upon Christina's advice, although she had recommended to him the elder of the Duke's two daughters, instead of the younger. A note appended to a history of her reign prepared under her eye, betrays the woman who declined to believe in the consolation of her own former lover.

"In marrying," she wrote, "the King displayed the greatest melancholy, saying, 'How unhappy am I ! I am King, and I am married. Christina made me King; she has given me a wife ; but I shall be unhappy all my life, since she has refused me the glory of possessing her. Nothing can comfort me for this.' He uttered

these words," adds his cousin, "in the presence of several persons of quality of both sexes." [1]

The election of the new Pope took place in April 1655. Alexander VII., who, as Cardinal Chigi, had manifested an interest in Christina's affairs, reigned at Rome; and, pending the result of the attempt she was making to set her financial affairs upon a securer footing, Philip of Spain was employed as an intermediary to obtain permission for her to visit Rome without having published abroad her conversion. As Christina's confidant and her present host, the King explained to the Pope the condition of her affairs and the importance of postponing her public confession of faith.

"Adding to the obligations she has conferred upon me," proceeded the King, "she has desired that it should be I who should communicate to your Blessedness tidings so welcome, choosing me, besides, to be sponsor for her regeneration; so that together we may arrive at the most sacred feet of your Holiness with this noble trophy of the Church." [2]

Alexander proved inexorable, declining to receive the new convert at Rome until she had openly avowed her change of faith; and Christina, reluctant to remain for an indefinite period at Brussels, decided upon braving the displeasure of her countrymen. On September 22, therefore, she started on her journey towards Innsbruck, where it had been arranged that she should comply with the Pope's demands.

She was accompanied by a motley company, some members of it being attached permanently to her household, others, though travelling at her expense, occupying a more uncertain position in her retinue. All races and nationalities mixed and jostled one another. Sweden was scantily represented by a single gentleman and two

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 174.
[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède* etc. pp., 37, 38 *n.*

or three inferior officers. A Spaniard, Don Antonio della Cueva y Silva, a nominee of Pimentelli's, had been made Grand Equerry, his wife occupying the post of principal lady-in-waiting. Only five women, in all, were to be found amongst the two hundred and twenty persons composing the train made up of Flemings, Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Italians. A Spanish treasurer ruled over the Chancery ; two Swedes and a Frenchman filled subordinate officers in it. As representatives of Spain and Austria, Christina was accompanied by Pimentelli, and Montecuculi, who had acted as the Emperor's envoy in Sweden.

And thus Christina set out on her way to Rome.

CHAPTER XII

1655–6

The journey south—Christina's public confession of faith—Letters to Gustavus Charles and the Pope—Enters Rome—Her life there—Anger in Sweden—Disappointment in Rome—Letters to Ebba Sparre—Quarrels with Roman nobles—Household dissensions and disorders—She starts for Sweden.

THE progress of Gustavus Adolphus's daughter through the lands where his triumphs had been won must have seemed, even to herself, strange and anomalous; and thoughts of the great soldier can scarcely have failed to crowd to her mind as she moved onwards under the escort of the representatives of the Powers he had fought and defeated. When, at Augsburg, she was shown the table where the Protestant champion had dined as master of Bavaria, her eyes filled with tears. The emotion was transitory. She was too full of the present to have time or leisure to spare for the past.

Everywhere she was received with honour and respect, but she made little delay in the cities through which she passed, refusing the Elector Palatine's invitation to visit Heidelberg, declining the public reception offered her on her way through Frankfort, and cutting short her interview with the Elector, his wife and his sisters, who, curious to see her, had come to Boxberg for the purpose.

On her approach to Innsbruck she was met by the Archduke and Duchess, and conducted in state into the town, where all was in readiness for the ceremony

which was to declare to Europe her reconciliation with the Roman Church. Lucas Holstenius, a Lutheran convert, had been sent as Apostolic Legate from Rome, and in the cathedral, on November 3, the Queen made profession, before a brilliant company, of the Catholic faith, the sermon being preached on the text, "Listen, O daughter, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house."

The event was celebrated by illuminations and public rejoicings, though, if the Italian historian, Gualdo, is to be believed, apologies were made by the official responsible for the arrangements, who explained that, had the nature of the day's ceremonial been known to him beforehand, the plays and operas prepared for the entertainment of the guest would have been of a character more befitting the gravity of the occasion.[1] M. Chevreau, the Queen's former secretary, spread abroad the report that, unable to refrain, even at that moment, from a jest, she compared the religious ceremony of the morning with the comedy she had witnessed later in the day. One prefers, however, to believe the story unfounded; and most people will agree that Leibnitz was not overstating the case when, repeating the tale, he observed that, if it was true, Christina had failed to preserve due decorum.

The matter finally concluded, it remained to make the formal announcement of it to those from whom it could not be concealed. Amongst such persons the most important was Charles Gustavus, in whose hands it chiefly lay to render her future prosperous or straitened, so far as matters of finance were concerned. On the day following the ceremony Christina accordingly wrote to inform him of what could no longer remain a secret.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 491.

"Monsieur mon Frère," she wrote, "I arrived safely at this place, where I found permission and command from his Holiness to declare myself that which I have long been. I esteem myself happy in yielding him obedience, and prefer this glory to that of reigning over the powerful States that you possess. You should love this action, even though you should believe I have chosen ill, since it is so greatly to your advantage, and has neither changed the love I owe to Sweden nor the affection I bear you, to whom I shall ever be Christina." [1]

To Alexander VII., in whose honour she had added the name Alessandra to her own, she wrote in the same spirit. She had, she told him, shown all the world that to render him obedience she had relinquished with joy a kingdom where veneration for his Holiness was accounted an unpardonable sin. Laying aside all human respect, she had made it known that the glory of obeying the Pope was dearer to her than that attached to a throne. "I entreat your Holiness," she continued, "to receive me, stripped as I am of all greatness, with the same paternal affection you have hitherto shown me. Having nothing more to sacrifice at your sacred feet than my person, my blood, and my life, I offer you all, with the blind obedience which is your due." [2]

Christina did not linger long at Innsbruck. Having qualified herself for admission to Rome, she was impatient to reach it, and on November 8 her journey thither was resumed.

All manner of rumours had preceded her, and Italy was full of gossip concerning the guest it was to receive. It was said that the Pope had made inquiries of the Roman bankers as to what amount of money had been deposited with them on the Queen's

[1] Arckenholtz, t, i., p. 149.
[2] Pallavicino, *Vita di Alessandro VII.*, t. i., pp. 361, 362.

account; and that, hearing there was none, he had been much dejected; that the people had been taxed to furnish funds for the magnificent reception to be accorded her; that, after a short stay in Rome, she was to proceed to Spain and to take the veil. What is certain is that the fame of her great renunciation rendered all eager to pay homage to the dispossessed Queen; and, as she moved onwards, the towns through which she passed vied with each other in doing so. On the frontier of the Papal States she was met by four Nuncios, deputed by Alexander to meet "quella memorabile pellegrina"; and, though not without hesitation, it had been resolved that she should be provided at first with lodgings in the Vatican itself. Every care had been taken in the preparation of her apartments; the Pope had visited them in person, and so much attention had been paid to details that an inscription running *Omne malum ab aquilone*, in allusion to the north wind, was covered up lest it should give offence to the guest.[1]

Under the escort of the Nuncios and their attendants Christina traversed the papal dominions; was met nine miles from Rome by two Cardinals, who placed one of the Pope's carriages at her disposal, and in this fashion, at seven o'clock on a winter's night, she entered the city. In spite of the informal character of her first arrival, the streets were lit by innumerable torches, and filled by such crowds as to cause her to observe merrily that it seemed best to enter Rome incognito. Conducted at once to the presence of the Pope, she was welcomed by him in royal fashion, was led to her apartments, and was visited on the morrow by Alexander in person.

It was not to be expected that the pageant-loving Romans would consent to be defrauded of a spectacle, and two days later, on December 23, the state entry

[1] Pallavicino, *Vita di Alessandro VII.*, t. i., p. 375.

From an engraving by Gaspar Huberti.

POPE ALEXANDER VII.

of the northern Queen took place, with all magnificence of pomp and display. Dressed once more in masculine attire, wearing a plumed hat, and riding her white horse cross-saddle, Christina passed through the streets of the city, escorted by the Swiss guard and accompanied by a brilliant company. If the feminine portion of the spectators were at first startled by the Queen's garb and bearing, "they recovered from their astonishment on learning that she had the heart of a hero and had made war upon the King of Denmark." [1]

Passing through lines of soldiers and amidst the roar of artillery and volleys of musket-shot, she reached St. Peter's, to be received by the clergy at the door, and conducted first to the high Altar, and thence to the Pope's chapel; where she once again expressed to Alexander her joy and gratitude, the Pope telling her, in reply, that so great was the value of her conversion that it was celebrated in heaven by a greater festival than was visible on earth. On Christmas Day she received Confirmation and Holy Communion at his hands, and her initiation into her new life was complete.

There are moments in the lives of most men and women conspicuous in the history of the world when, looking back, we say it had been well had the end then come—times when the culminating point, whether of heroism or greatness or success, has been reached and nothing but decline remains. If this was not the case with Christina on that Christmas Day, it was something like it. To take the most favourable and not altogether unjustified view of the situation, she had completed her act of sacrifice; had thrown aside a crown she had worn for twenty-two years for the sake of other things she valued more; had abjured a religion she had never loved; had reached the goal of her pilgrimage, and accomplished her purpose. In

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., p. 499.

the eyes of some who gazed upon her she was a heroine ; to others she wore the aureole of a saint.

What she was in her own eyes it is difficult to say. The plaudits of the crowd are a deafening accompaniment, making a sane estimate hard to arrive at, and it comes near to being impossible for Kings and Queens to realise that a standard exists by which they and chimney-sweepers alike are measured. At Rome flattery had reached its culminating point, and, with the words of the Vicar of Christ echoing in her ears, could Christina be altogether blameworthy if her inordinate sense of her importance was strengthened and fixed, and she was rendered the more certain that, in effecting the salvation of her soul, she had performed an action calling for not only the praise, but the gratitude, of Heaven itself?

And yet it is easy to form too harsh a judgment ; and it may be that, beneath the unreality and artificiality inseparable from the pageant of royalty ; beneath the self-consciousness and vanity and self-glorification marring and defacing the deed of renunciation and overlaying the gold with tinsel, a genuine spirit of sacrifice had been a motive power ; and in spite of all that had been at work to vulgarise and render it suspect, that deed had been done partly in response to a true spiritual instinct, and Christina, in her measure and degree, could say to the Lord, "Behold, I have left all and followed Thee. What shall I have therefore?"

What shall I have? The natural, human, ungenerous question follows in almost inevitable sequence upon the boast. In Christina's case rewards, of a sort, had been promptly bestowed. For the Queen adventuress life was beginning with an ovation. Rome was eager to entertain its guest, Christina eager to taste of all the pleasures it had to offer. The atmosphere of the cosmopolitan city, to a woman whose personal experience had been, till eighteen

months earlier, limited to that of her sober provincial home, was full of novelty and charm ; her old passion for learning and art reasserted its sway, and at the Palazzo Farnese, placed at her disposal by the Duke of Parma, the representatives of literature and science held weekly meetings, forming themselves, under her auspices, into a species of Academy ; discussions on the moral questions Christina had always loved being varied by the reading of poetry and musical performances. Entertainments at the great Roman houses were given in her honour, and so the winter passed away. Whether, amidst the pleasures and excitement of her new mode of life the thoughts of the Queen ever turned northward ; whether a pang of home-sickness for the grey skies and mists of her childhood and youth, for the white reaches of snow and the sledges and the reindeer, and perhaps for some remembered faces, made itself felt, none can say ; any more than it can be divined whether moments occurred when she regretted the power and influence she had forfeited in ceasing to rule over a people who had loved the daughter of their national hero to the point of adoration.

A letter dated January 6, again addressed to Ebba Sparre, would seem to show that at that moment something was lacking to her satisfaction. "The envy shown by the stars towards human felicity prevents me from being perfectly happy, since I can never be so at a distance from you. Never doubt of this, and believe that, in whatever part of the world I may be, there is a person devoted to you as I have always been. But is it possible, *Belle*, that you still remember me ? Am I as dear to you as formerly ? Was I not mistaken when I persuaded myself that I was the person in the world whom you most loved ? Ah, if that is so, do not undeceive me : leave me in my error, and do not grudge me the imaginary bliss of thinking

myself loved by the most charming woman in the world. . . . Adieu, *Belle*, adieu." [1]

Meanwhile, in Sweden, disappointment and anger were the more bitter because of the very affection it had cherished for its Queen. Bishop Matthiæ, certainly not responsible for the proceedings of a pupil who had long emancipated herself from the influence of a preceptor, became the victim of suspicion, and, notwithstanding a lengthy protest he had addressed to the Queen on the subject of her conversion, was deprived of his bishopric. Public attention had, however, been distracted from Christina by the war upon which her successor had entered with Poland and the victories he had won; and, for her part, the sentiments entertained concerning her were chiefly of importance as affecting the subject of finance. Would her income continue to be paid, or would it be withheld? It was a serious question, not only to Christina herself, but to the Pope, to whose friendship the maintenance of a semi-royal establishment would be a severe test. Supplies being in arrears, the Queen decided to send her secretary, Appelmann, to Stockholm, to ascertain the intentions of the Government, and to renew the attempt to obtain a commutation of her revenues into a sum of one million five hundred thousand crowns. Should this proposal be rejected, Appelmann was to endeavour to set on foot a more gradual exchange of lands for cash; in the event of her return to her native land, he was to demand, on her behalf and that of her Court, the free exercise of their religion.

The mission was partly successful. Charles Gustavus was an honest man, and in no wise desirous of escaping his obligations. Though declining to accede to his cousin's fresh proposals, he pledged himself anew to the observance of the old arrangement; and the

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i., pp. 528, 529.

income she continued for the present to enjoy was, if not all she had anticipated, sufficient for the requirements of her household, had it been placed upon a proper footing. This, however, was unfortunately far from being the case, and its condition was soon to give rise to fresh difficulties.

Rome and Christina had quickly ceased to answer to each other's expectations. An ideal Queen had existed in the minds of those who awaited her coming —a Queen brilliant in regard to the intellectual gifts which were of world-wide renown, devout, modest, humble, and anxious to sit at the feet of the Pope, and to learn, in the atmosphere of Rome, all the spiritual lore there to be acquired. This dream was dispelled almost upon the day that saw Christina ride into the city upon her white charger. It may well have been a shock to those who had indulged it to find themselves confronted with a woman self-confident and impatient of control, brusque and independent in bearing, showing deference neither to man nor woman, layman or ecclesiastic ; proud of herself, her gifts, her attainments, her career ; more tenacious of her dignity and rights than if she held the sceptre ; as far removed from humility as when she sat upon the throne. Conscious of no need of instruction or guidance, Pallavicino quotes her as declaring that, holy and matchless as she held the Pope to be in other respects, she would have thought shame of it had he surpassed her in the matter of faith ; other praises might be bestowed upon her out of mere courtesy— this was justice alone.[1]

Good and bad qualities combined to effect the disenchantment of the religious world of Rome. If Christina was no saint, neither was she disposed to simulate sanctity, or to offer an object-lesson of piety in high places. What she felt she showed ; what she did not

[1] Pallavicino, *Vita di Alessandro VII.*, t. i., p. 379.

feel she declined to assume. It was noted by one of the curious observers whose watchful gaze was fixed upon her that, admitted by the Pope to Communion, she displayed devotion, "but not excessive devotion," and that the eyes of both Pope and Queen were, contrary to expectation, dry. The disappointed writer added that the suggestion that Christina should reside near some conventual establishment, with a view to her exercise in piety, was in contemplation.[1] Alexander would have liked the convert from whom so much had been hoped to have borne herself after a different fashion: to have, for instance, recited the rosary in public, and presented an edifying spectacle to the world.[2] Nothing was further from the Queen's intentions. As a letter to Turin stated, she was making good her word not to live like a bigot;[3] and, in avoiding the appearance of bigotry, she went to the opposite extreme. There was, sighs Pallavicino, no visible devotion, no spiritual conversation, no pious reading; much less were there works of penitence or prayer.[4] Yet, in spite of all this, the Queen was plainly anxious to please the Pope; she sought his advice, and in some sort showed him honour and respect. Pallavicino, his regrets notwithstanding, was fair enough to attribute part of what was lacking in her to a persuasion that nothing should be done for appearance' sake, and that the applause of men was not to be sought—"in which, perhaps," he adds, "some pride secretly mingled, all but God being despised by her as her inferiors."[5]

There was another side to the picture; and if the impression made by Christina upon Rome was not altogether favourable, her letters indicate that irritation on her part was keen. It may be that, in spite of the defi-

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 38.
[2] Pallavicino, t. i., p. 336.
[3] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 57.
[4] Pallavicino, t. i., p. 385. [5] *Ibid.*

ance with which she met remonstrance, the consciousness of disapproval, the secret sense that she had failed to fulfil expectation, was embittering to a proud and self-satisfied woman, unaccustomed to submit meekly to criticism. It must also, in fairness, be borne in mind that, if Christina's attitude towards religion and its representatives in Rome owed something to a mind naturally arrogant and self-assertive, her views on matters spiritual were imbued with a healthy independence not calculated to find favour in a purely ecclesiastical atmosphere. Her opinions on such points are to be sought, not so much in heated and violent utterances or disputes, as in the deliberate expression of them contained in her written compositions. In her "sentimens," or maxims, her sincere and genuine faith in God and in the Church is unhesitatingly avowed, with the reasons dictating her reconciliation with a body whose decrees demand blind and unquestioning submission. On the other hand, she was no less explicit in limiting the priestly jurisdiction. "An exact account must be rendered to confessors of all criminal thoughts, words, and actions; the rest is not their affair. . . . They must be suffered to speak freely, but we must not obey them blindly; and must be very sure that, however holy and detached they seem, it is not always God who speaks through them."

In these passages Christina takes up an attitude which few would gainsay. Her violent or sneering attacks on those whose kindness and hospitality she enjoyed is another matter.

"On my arrival," she told the Comtesse Ebba Sparre, "the Pope sent me a note of 100,000 crowns, which I returned to him on the spot. His Holiness attributes my pretended conversion to himself, and wished me to make all the world believe this. . . . He sees well that all his bonbons are too much

sugared for a *grande fille* who does not love directors."[1]

The letter, if authentic—and the style is very like Christina's—was plainly written in a thoroughly bad temper. Even allowing for this, the scoffing allusion to her conversion is perplexing, unless it be understood as an attempt to conciliate her enemies in Sweden. Whatever may be thought of her conduct in the future, it leaves no doubt that her adhesion to the Catholic Church was sincere.

A second effusion, addressed to the same correspondent, is still more unqualified in its tone of superiority to the follies she discerned around her. "Do not believe," she bade the Comtesse, "that though I am in a country once inhabited by the greatest men on earth . . . it is a land of sages and heroes, or a refuge for talent and virtue. O Cæsar, O Cato, O Cicero, masters of the world, that your country, rendered so illustrious by your virtues and your deeds, should be, to the shame and sorrow of all mankind, the prey of gross ignorance and of blind and absurd superstition! Oh, belle Comtesse, statues and obelisks and sumptuous palaces are here, but no men."[2]

At the conventions of Rome she openly jeered, causing the drapery in which the nude statues at the Palazzo Farnese had been swathed in her honour to be at once removed;[3] whilst the freedom and ease marking her intercourse with young men, as she mixed with them rather as a comrade of their own age than as a queen, afforded matter of regret to the Pope.[4] No pastime came amiss to her, whether it took the form of personally directing the cannon of St. Angelo upon the iron door of the Villa Medici, which long retained the marks of the assault; or of

[1] Lacombe, *Lettres secrètes de Christine.*
[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 48.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[4] Pallavicino, t. i., p. 384.

frequenting the theatre, so long as the performance was to be diverting or exciting, others being stigmatised by her as sermons in music; or of the arrangement of her Academy, in which, to her credit, panegyrics of herself were forbidden.

She was not so much engrossed by amusement as to prevent her from mastering the more serious side of Roman life; rapidly rendering herself, intimately acquainted with the condition of the papal court. Rome, and more particularly the Sacred College, was divided into factions each jealous of the other. Amongst the cardinals three parties in particular existed, the French, the Spanish, and the neutral—nicknamed the Flying Squadron—to which she was ultimately to attach herself. In the meantime it behoved a stranger to move with caution and to practise the arts of conciliation. Caution, however, was from first to last a quality Christina lacked; and, curiously exacting as she was in matters of etiquette, collisions were certain to occur. There was trouble, for instance, when at some religious function she was censed by an archbishop instead of a cardinal; and she preferred to forgo a visit to the Senate rather than permit its members to remain covered in her presence. Secure in his position, a reigning monarch might have waived points which Christina, uncrowned and sceptreless, considered essential, lest her royal dignity should be compromised. An excess of pretension in such matters did not conduce to peace and harmony in her relations with the great Roman nobles. Affronted by negligence and lack of courtesy on the part of a guest they had done their best to welcome, cabals were formed amongst them with the object of avenging by petty methods the slights they conceived to have been offered them, and on one occasion when she had issued invitations to forty guests, not one of those bidden came.

At issue with local magnates, she might have reckoned upon countenance and support from Spain had the cordiality of her friendship with Pimentelli been maintained ; but over this a change had passed. Making friends, losing friends, was a chief occupation of Christina's life ; enthusiastic admiration was quickly followed by a revulsion of feeling, and the dismissal of some of the Spaniards in her train had caused the greater resentment owing to the fact that they had been replaced by Frenchmen. Libels in Spanish were put in circulation, and della Cueva, jealous at the favour shown by her to others, spread abroad damaging reports with regard to his mistress.

The course dictated by wisdom would have been to take no cognisance of the matter ; and to have merely awaited a convenient opportunity to dismiss a disloyal servant. But Christina was not wise, and, by means of a document written in Italian and circulated in Rome, she exhibited her keen sense of annoyance, and took the public, with a total lack of dignity, into her confidence. The Spaniards, she explained, had been jealous, both of the Italian cardinals and of the French envoy, M. de Lionne : " To whom her Majesty replied that she would cultivate the friendship of whomsoever she pleased ; that they should not consider it strange that she should wish to keep on good terms with France, with which she had ever been connected ; that it was no new friendship that had been formed, but the cultivation of an old one. That, for the rest, she was no subject of the King of Spain's, that she should blindly adopt Spanish opinions and conform to Spanish intentions." So far she was perhaps justified in offering an explanation. It was a different matter when she proceeded to deal with her domestic affairs. Her equerry, della Cueva, had, she stated, been foremost in spreading calumnies concerning her ; whilst Pimentelli, lately her closest friend, is mentioned as one

of the hostile "Spanish faction." She had at first concealed her sentiments, so she declared, but finding that della Cueva was by this means only rendered the more insolent, she had intimated to him that he would do well to return to Flanders. And the parting scene between mistress and servant is graphically described; when Cueva, having expressed a perfunctory regret that he had not served her as well as he should, Christina replied that it was for his conscience to tell him whether he had served her well or ill; that he might rest assured that she would always know how to reward loyalty and chastise a scoundrel; and should she ever learn that he had used language with regard to her wanting in respect she would cause him to receive his deserts, wherever he might be. Not content with these amenities, the Queen sent a message to Philip of Spain to the effect that, had her late equerry not had the honour of being a Spanish general, she would have had corporal punishment administered to him. Another message to the Spanish ambassador, the Duke of Terranuova, admonished him to speak of her with respect, since, now that della Cueva no longer belonged to her household, it contained none but brave and honourable gentlemen, ready to give proof of these qualities should he not comport himself as befitted his office. The incident was closed by a visit paid by Christina to the Pope, when, after giving him an account of all that had taken place, she assured his Holiness of her obedience in cases of conscience; but added that it was her belief that each person must take care of his honour, and that she had done as she thought best for the preservation of her own.[1]

In her estimate of della Cueva Christina was probably right; she was lamentably deceived when she imagined that, with his dismissal, all would be well with her household. The reports of the Marchese

[1] Arckenholtz, t. i. pp. 521-7.

Giandemaria, left by his master the Duke in charge of the Palazzo Farnese and its guests, describe a scarcely credible condition of disorder, thieving, and robbery. The ornaments were dragged from the hangings and stolen; a gaming-table was set up; doors were burnt as firewood, silver was replaced by plated copper. Even the medals of the ducal collection needed careful guardianship from those in charge of them lest they should be appropriated by members of Christina's train.[1] Della Cueva had been either unable to keep order in the nondescript company of which he was the nominal head, or had not troubled himself to do so. Before his dismissal he had been replaced in the Queen's confidence by men no less unworthy of her trust; who were, moreover, to be associated with the darkest chapter of her history, and one leaving an indelible stain upon her memory. These men were the Count Francesco Maria Santinelli and his brother Ludovico—said to have first attracted her attention by their skill in dancing—and the ill-fated Marchese Gian Rinaldo Monaldesco.

All things considered, it might have been expected that it would not have been with unmixed regret that the Pope received an intimation from his turbulent guest of her intention of leaving Rome for a season. That he considered it his duty to protest against a return to Lutheran surroundings says much for his genuine anxiety for her spiritual welfare. It was true that, so far as Alexander was personally concerned, she had not desisted from her attempts to conciliate his good opinion, had in Lent substituted spiritual conferences for the secular meetings of her Academy, and had sacred music performed and sermons delivered. Amendment in other matters was, nevertheless, slow; and her tone was not that of one who had stripped herself of sovereignty, but

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 46.

who had come to bear rule in the country of her adoption. To hints cautiously administered by the Pope, through carefully selected channels, she replied that she was as she was found to be, and that those who were not content with her might remain discontented. These words, adds Pallavicino, went to the Pope's heart, as depriving him, in spite of the deference she showed him in private, of the hope of amending her.[1] The hope only remained to him that, the fruit being good, though bitter, ripeness might bring it to perfection.[2]

More reasons than one contributed, as spring advanced, to decide Christina upon quitting her present place of abode. The plague had appeared in Rome, making it well for those in a position to do so to depart. Money was also running increasingly short, and a visit to Sweden might be advisable as a means of setting her financial affairs upon a more satisfactory footing. It was true that, though Alexander had withdrawn his opposition to her leaving Rome, he had attempted to turn the opportunity afforded by the pestilence to double profit and had made the suggestion that she should retire for safety into some conventual establishment, but the proposal was scouted by Christina, who replied that she had never indulged a like propensity and desired rather to die on the field of battle. Having no wish to face death in another and less alluring form, she decided upon quitting the infected city and making her way back to Sweden by way of France and Belgium. The expenses of the journey were met by the sale of her horses and carriages, supplemented by a gift of 10,000 crowns from the Pope and another 12,000 raised upon her diamonds.[3] Alexander lent ships of transport, and on June 19 she set out on her journey; a news-agent

[1] Pallavicino, t. ii., p. 28. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i., p. 386.
[3] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 53.

at Paris hazarding the opinion, quoted from the letter of a certain person who had "shuffled himself into her retinue, . . . being a man of invincible boldness for such attempts," that anything less than the plague might have been counter-balanced in the eyes of those the Queen left behind her, by her absence.[1]

Thus ended Christina's first visit to Rome. Whatever might be the impression close contact with her had left upon the Pope, tales of his generosity to the convert had got abroad, and Aubigny is found citing it as an inducement to Charles II. to permit his young brother, Gloucester, to be brought up a Catholic; humbly desiring "your Majesty to consider that the Pope himself, who upon occasion of the Queen of Sweden's conversion—a woman neither very staid, nor extraordinary pious, and unlike to be any support or countenance to Catholic religion . . . expended 100,000 crowns." The King would thereby easily see how much more advantageous it would be to have his brother bred in the Catholic religion.[2]

The appeal to worldly motives has at least the merit of candour; Charles was nevertheless obdurate, and Gloucester remained a Protestant.

Christina's sojourn in Rome, unprofitable in much, had left her an acquisition, in one sense of more than doubtful value, affecting the whole of her future life. This was the friendship to which she remained constant to the end with Cardinal Azzolino.[3]

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 721.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 742.

[3] Christina's correspondence with the Cardinal during the years 1666–8, as well as during the months of the Conclave of Pope Clement X., placed by the Azzolino family at the disposal of Baron de Bildt, is, with the Baron's own researches, invaluable as throwing light upon the Queen's character.

CHAPTER XIII

1656

Christina arrives in France—At Fontainebleau—Meets Mademoiselle—Reception in Paris—At Chantilly and at Compiègne—Her success at Court—Concludes her visit—Mademoiselle's farewell.

THOUGH Christina's train was not so large as that with which she had entered Italy, she was accompanied by some sixty persons, mostly Italians, when she set out from Rome, della Cueva's vacant post being filled by Monaldesco, whilst Santinelli was Chamberlain.

Orders had been issued by the French Court that the Queen's reception was to be a royal one, the Duc de Guise being dispatched to meet her and to act as Master of the Ceremonies. Though the Duke was noted for his *génie romanesque* he does not appear to have found his duties to his liking, and, writing to a friend "dans le temps que je m'ennuie cruellement," sent him a description of his charge, and of her dress, appearance, and manners. She was in many respects more like a man than a woman, and at least as proud as her father, Gustavus the Great; was very polite, spoke eight languages, and notably French as if born in Paris. Her knowledge exceeded that of the Academy and Sorbonne combined, and she was better versed in the intrigues of the French Court than Guise himself. She was, in fact, an astonishing person.[1]

Such was also the opinion of Mademoiselle de

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, t. iv., pp. 59, 60.

Montpensier, when she, in her turn, became acquainted with the traveller. La Grande Mademoiselle, long the object of Christina's admiration, and, with regard to her exploits during the Fronde, of envy, was expiating her performances by exile from Court. She had been taking the waters at Forges, and, the cure completed, had considered whether it would not be well to avoid returning to her place of banishment by a route which, affording a glimpse of Paris or its environs—the paradise she might not enter—would render her present existence more intolerable.[1] Having, however, decided to face this ordeal, she further obtained leave from the King to pay her respects to the royal guest at Fontainebleau, and to satisfy the curiosity she shared with the whole of Europe with regard to the discrowned Queen. Before waiting upon her, however, she considered it best to make sure that she would be treated in conformity with her position, and the messenger she dispatched to Fontainebleau was instructed to demand the privilege of a *fauteuil*. It was better, she observed, to ask too much than too little. Christina was not in a mood to make difficulties.

"Anything she asks," was her reply. "Though much is due to her rank, there is no honour I would not pay to her person. Would she wish to pass before me?" she added with a touch of humour. "From what I have heard of her it is well to know, since, should she chance to be at the door, she would not make way."

On the evening of September 8, during the performance of a ballet, the meeting took place. Mademoiselle, always inclined to scoff, had been prepared to find herself overcome by laughter at the Queen's dress and appearance. Reality did not correspond with her expectations. "She surprised me," she

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, ed. by A. Chéruel, t. ii., pp. 452, *seq.*

confesses, "and it was not in a manner to make me laugh." It is indeed noticeable that, whatever might be their sentiments with regard to Christina, it does not appear that she moved many persons to merriment. Her dress on this occasion was a compromise, and was composed of a grey skirt decorated with gold and silver lace, a flame-coloured *juste-au-corps*, and a kerchief of *point de Gênes* tied with a flame-coloured ribbon. She wore a blonde periwig, such as was then in use amongst women, and carried a black plumed hat. Her face was fair, her blue eyes were now soft, now hard. "A tout prendre," concluded Mademoiselle impartially, "elle me parut un joli petit garçon."

Christina, for her part, received her guest with marked cordiality. She had, she said, desired passionately to see her, and gave her her hand to help her to climb over a bench which stood between them in the crowded room.

"Vous avez assez de disposition pour sauter," she observed; proceeding to question her new acquaintance closely as to her family and to show a remarkable conversancy with Court gossip.

"The Comtesse de Fiesque is not beautiful," she observed of a lady who was present, "to have made so much stir. Is the Chevalier de Gramont still in love with her?"

A comedy followed upon the ballet, when Mademoiselle was startled and scandalised by the oaths used by Christina to emphasise her approval of what she saw, as well as by her fashion of lounging in her chair and the unseemliness of her gestures and movements. For the rest, she talked much and pleasantly, though falling at times into deep reveries, from which she roused herself suddenly, as if from sleep.

The entertainment was ended by a display of fireworks, causing Mademoiselle, as she frankly confessed, some alarm, ridiculed by the Queen.

"What!" she exclaimed, "a demoiselle who has taken part in *occasions*, and has performed such fine actions, is afraid!"

Mademoiselle was not to be abashed. It was only *aux occasions* that she was brave, she explained. That sufficed her. So the talk went on, Christina owning that the greatest wish she had in the world was to be present on a battle-field; that she should never be happy till it had been fulfilled.

A private conversation ensued, when, in a gallery apart, Christina questioned her guest about her quarrels with her father; expressed her opinion that she was in the right and the Duc d'Orléans wrong—it is to be noted that he had omitted to send a representative to greet the Queen—and added that she would do what she could in the matter, and she wished Mademoiselle was Queen. Mademoiselle doubtless shared the wish; but when Christina further notified her intention of speaking to Mazarin on the subject, she was wise enough to beg her to refrain. It was not a moment when the Cardinal would be inclined to listen favourably to advice of the kind.

Two o'clock in the morning had come before Mademoiselle, feeling, like Guise, that her new acquaintance was *tout à fait extraordinaire*, regained her lodgings, and day had dawned before she had had supper and retired to rest. What Christina thought of Mademoiselle is not recorded, but it is probable that her sharp tongue and independent habits rendered her a more congenial companion to the Queen than the other ladies who, meeting her at Fontainebleau, insisted upon a mode of salutation she regarded with disapproval and contempt.

"How anxious these ladies are to kiss me!" she observed sardonically, after submitting to the ordeal. "Is it because I look like a man?"[1]

[1] *Ménagiana*, t. ii., p. 357.

Photo by W. A. Mansell & Co., from the original painting.

LA GRANDE MADEMOISELLE.

p. 158]

On September 8 her public entry into Paris was made. For the last time she received the homage paid to a sovereignty that had become no more than a name. Nothing that could add to the splendour of scenic effect was omitted from the pageant ; and as the Queen rode through the city upon her great white horse, clad in scarlet embroidered in gold and silver, and with her pistols at her saddle-bow, all Paris combined to do her honour. When, at nine in the evening, she crossed by torchlight the bridge of Notre Dame and passed through the streets, Gui Patin, who witnessed the scene, had never seen so great a multitude ; nor, he conjectured, had she.[1] The Governor of the City, dignitaries of the Church, representatives of the universities, united in their welcome, and her lodgings had been prepared in the King's apartments at the Louvre.

Yet something—perhaps only in the Queen's temper—must have gone wrong, for she was ungracious during supper ; professed the greatest indifference to all she had seen either at Paris or in Rome, and turned the Provost of the Merchants into ridicule, declaring the only thing she had noticed about him had been his fall from his horse. She had, she said loftily, in fact paid no attention to the proceedings, having been occupied with other things. Her hosts, rebuffed and indignant, complained openly of her undisguised coldness and indifference,[2] and her visit to the capital began ill.

It was probably no more than a passing mood that M. Gallois thus described in a letter to his friend M. Gyllenstolpe, and the unfavourable impression created was soon effaced. Christina could never fairly be charged with a lack of interest in her surroundings, and there was much in Paris to call it forth. Henrietta

[1] *Lettres de Gui Patin*, t. ii., p. 249.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 139.

Maria, another Queen in exile, with her daughter Mary, Princess of Orange, had witnessed her state entry and visited her upon the following day ; and amongst the harangues celebrating her presence in the French capital was one pronounced by Patru in the name of the Académie Française.

Never, said the orator in the course of a speech couched in language of almost hysterical exaggeration, had the body he represented longed for anything as it had longed for this day—for the contemplation of the divine Princess whose life, filled with marvels, had made the age beautiful. That longing was satisfied : "It sees you ; it contemplates you. But, good God, what bitterness mingles with its joy, when it reflects that in a moment it is to lose, mayhap for ever, your adorable person !"—with much more in the same strain.

Paris was determined that Christina should not only be a prodigy, not only a heroine, but likewise a saint ; and surely, in spite of the high opinion the Queen entertained of herself, she must have secretly laughed—there was always something of the *gamine* in her—at the tributes she received. Amongst her many faults hypocrisy did not find a place. She would never, she once said, be good enough to be a saint, or bad enough to pretend it; nor was it her fashion to regulate her manners so as to suit the part assigned her. At Notre Dame her bearing was not, in the curious and watchful eyes of those present, befitting a convert whose zeal had not had time to cool, and Mademoiselle mentions with displeasure the conversation she kept up during the celebration of Mass. The Bishop of Amiens, too, had informed this same critical observer that, on coming to confession, she had placed herself on her knees and had looked him squarely in the face—"entre deux yeux"—which scandalised Mademoiselle

very greatly. The exterior, she observed, should be at least as full of penitence as the heart; though she added that M. d'Amiens had found nothing amiss in serious matters, and had declared himself more edified by the Queen's sentiments than by her bearing.[1]

In spite of Mademoiselle, Paris liked its visitor. "She gained all the hearts," observes Madame de Motteville grudgingly, "which she would perhaps have quickly lost had she remained there longer." Everyone admired her bright intelligence, and marvelled at the amount of her knowledge. She knew what pictures the Marquis de Sourdis and the Duc de Liancourt possessed, and could supply Frenchmen with information about France. Eager and interested, her first ill-humour over, she showed so much courtesy to her hosts, more especially when they were men, that the Parisians began to discredit the tales that had been circulated to her disadvantage. By her change of religion, observed Patin, though never inclined to over-indulgence, she had sharpened the tongues of Protestant ministers against her honour. It was better to say no harm of it, and only to believe good. She had, at all events, increased her reputation greatly by her journey to Paris.[2] She was neither fool nor bigot, so he admitted on another occasion.

In the world of literature Ménage appears to have acted as cicerone. "I introduced," he says, "the persons of importance who came to pay their respects to the Queen. I never failed to name them and to say something of the merits of those with whom I was acquainted. 'This,' I would say, 'is M. le Président such a one, M. le Conseiller such another, men of merit.' I do not know whether she thought I was not speaking the truth, or whether she perceived that it was impossible that I did not lie at times in

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. ii., p. 496.
[2] *Lettres*, t. iv., p. 278.

speaking so well of all these gentlemen. But I heard her say, with an air of annoyance, 'This M. Ménage seems to know a great many men of merit.'"[1] Ménage was also present when, at the house of the Duc de Guise, M. Gilbert, Christina's Resident in Paris, read aloud a comedy he had written. Opinions on the subject of the composition differed. Chapelain, whilst pronouncing as favourably upon it as he could, showed that he considered the verses coarse. Ménage, more anxious to please the Queen than to sustain his reputation as a judge, replied to her inquiry by declaring the work, *en ton courtisan*, one of the finest plays that had yet appeared. Christina was visibly gratified.

"I am glad, Monsieur," she answered, "that it is to your taste. In you one can have confidence. As for your M. Chapelain, what a poor fellow he is!—il voudroit que tout fût Pucelle"—in allusion to the critic's own work upon Joan of Arc.[2]

Paris explored, its churches and places of interest visited, its homage paid, it had been arranged that the Queen should visit the King and his mother, then at Compiègne. Lockhart, the English ambassador, who was watching the ovations offered to the guest with no friendly eye, expressed his opinion that, though her stay at Court was not expected to exceed four or five days, he doubted much if she would be got rid of so soon;[3] and a Colonel Bamfylde, who seems to have been an English news-agent at Paris, wrote to the authorities at home in the same spirit, natural enough in a Puritan official. "Her wit," he wrote, "is as much cried up here as her extravagant comportment is decried," adding that a visit might be looked for from her in England, since she had told Queen Henrietta

[1] *Ménagiana*, t. iv., p. 24. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i., p. 137.
[3] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 369.

that peradventure she would go to Scotland. Some people, pursued the Colonel, considered her designs of importance, others not so, "and a third think them not of any weight at all, but to be mere fancy and pageantry."[1] Bamfylde was constrained to admit, in a letter written after the visit to Paris was concluded, that her wit was much magnified by all who had talked with her. He thought, however, that the civility shown her had been rather due to her religion and to orders issued by the Court than to other reasons. The French, he added, with British contempt, were always in extremes, either the greatest parasites or the severest satirists in the world.

In spite of the desire attributed by the English envoy to the French authorities to be quit of their visitor as speedily as possible, she was eagerly awaited at Compiègne by a Court which, under the auspices of Anne of Austria—the episode long past when her beauty had set George Villiers's heart aflame—had become a model of propriety, governed by the laws of etiquette at a time when artificiality was pre-eminently the rule. Louis, still under twenty and not yet emancipated from the control of his mother and Mazarin, was paying his timid and respectful addresses to the Cardinal's niece, Marie de Mancini—who, with the dazzling possibility of a crown to strengthen her principles, was prudently keeping her boy-lover at a distance—and outward morality was in fashion.

Upon this scene of decorum Christina was to arrive, a law to herself, recognising no other ; reckless of conventional restraints, heedless of offended susceptibilities, of customs she might transgress or of scandals she might cause ; quick-witted, shrewd, critical and sharp-tongued ; showing pleasure when she was pleased, annoyance or *ennui* when she felt them ; and modifying

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 389.

manners or conduct not a jot in deference to her surroundings. The portrait painted of her by Madame de Motteville, too lengthy to reproduce in full, is like that of a wayfarer suddenly introduced from the roadway, tanned, weather-beaten, dusty and travel-stained, with the freedom and roughness engendered by a life of liberty, into a company whose dress, manners, speech, conduct, and morals were all settled in accordance with a strictly conventional standard, and carefully arranged with a view to effect. And yet this visitor had been a queen from childhood, a centre of interest to Europe for years, and was, in addition, a scholar whose solitary attempt at disguise was a desire to conceal her learning, lest she should pass for a pedant. Her mastery of the French language and accent was that of a Parisian ; and her conversancy with French affairs, public and domestic, greater than that of men born and bred in France.

If Bamfylde is to believed, Christina had earnestly desired to see Mazarin and converse with him before she visited the Court, having matters of importance to discuss.[1] It had, at all events, been settled that the Cardinal, bound, as a Prince of the Church, to show the convert special civility, should meet her at Chantilly, where the journey to Compiègne was to be broken, and there she accordingly found him awaiting her. A still greater honour was to be paid her : when, dinner ended, two lads entered the apartment, presented by the Cardinal to the Queen as gentlemen of the best quality in France—the fact being that, impatient to satisfy their curiosity as to the guest, the King and his brother had taken this means of forestalling the meeting arranged for the following day.

At once penetrating the boys' incognito, Christina was equal to the occasion, responding to the Cardinal's

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 369.

introduction by observing that they looked born to wear crowns. Louis, being found out, resumed his true character, and expressed his regret that, owing to shortness of notice, the Queen's reception in France had not been worthy of her; Christina replied with compliments, and the acquaintance was successfully inaugurated; the King, though timid in those early days, remaining on easy and pleasant terms with his guest throughout her visit.

The ceremonial meeting with the Queen-mother took place on the following day, accompanied with "that pomp and glory," reported the English ambassador again, with evident irritation, "as no man can remember to have seen the like in France. In all [the King's] deportment to her he kept the distance and paid those profound respects that the duty of a subject obliges one to pay to his sovereign. To get yow [*sic*] of this unsavoury subject," pursued Lockhart, "I shall sum up all I have to say in a word. Her reception at Compiègne was suitable to her humour, which is extravagant beyond what is imaginable." [1]

The scene of Christina's first introduction to the French Court was laid in a house three miles distant from Compiègne, lent for that purpose, where the Queen-mother awaited the traveller on a terrace overlooking a square courtyard filled with soldiers. Presently a blare of trumpets heralded the guest's approach, as she drove up, accompanied by Mazarin and the Duc de Guise. Of her suite, which since her departure from Rome had strangely dwindled down to two shabby women-in-waiting and some few doubtful Italian nobles, none were visible. Alone, unaccompanied, the ex-Queen of Sweden met the mother of the Roi-Soleil. The wind had blown her hair out of curl, her hands were uncared for and

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 388.

rough, her complexion had suffered from sun and weather, and as, carelessly dressed in the semi-masculine attire she affected, she was led by the King of France into the house, the vagabond Queen seemed to his mother's waiting-woman like an *Egyptienne*, less brown-skinned than the generality of her race. Yet an observer so little prepossessed in her favour could not but confess that her eyes were fine, and that in her countenance a certain sweetness tempered the pride. "Enfin, je m'apperçus avec étonnement qu'elle me plaisoit."[1]

She pleased people of greater importance than Madame de Motteville. When, on her return to Compiègne, Anne had an opportunity of expressing her opinion of the guest, it was distinctly favourable. Herself the living embodiment of the conventional virtues lacking in Christina, the Queen-mother found a certain attraction, not only in her face but in the freedom of her manners and bearing. For the first quarter of an hour she confessed she had felt afraid of her; liking had followed, and she had ended by falling under her charm. For once, Christina had taken pains to please a woman. Anne was noted for her beautiful hands; and, on the pretext of a desire to inspect the miniatures of her sons set in bracelets, the guest had caused her to remove her gloves, and had paid her compliments upon a just subject of vanity.

Whether Christina's frank expression of opinion was always found equally admirable may be doubted. Taken to see an Italian play, she commented severely upon the inferiority of the performance, replying caustically, when told that the actors usually did better, that she did not doubt it—since they retained their post; and at a tragedy performed by the Jesuits she openly mocked. She would be sorry, she after-

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, t. v., p. 67.

wards told the King's confessor, himself belonging to the Society, to have the order for her enemy; but neither for confession nor for tragedy would she choose it. To the Fathers by whom the entertainment had been organised she was no less outspoken, nor was her criticism, according to Patin, confined to their dramatic efforts. "She told them her opinion frankly, and then said she knew, on good authority, what an amount of disorder they produced in Christendom—that they meddled too much in business affairs, and that many princes complained of it. The good Fathers were greatly surprised, and reported the matter to our Queen, who complained of it to Dame Christine. But the good Swedish lady did not stop there. She repeated to the Queen all she had said to those good Fathers and six times as much. Whereat our Queen was much amazed." [1]

If Christina expressed her disapproval bluntly when the entertainments provided for her were not to her taste, taken to the Comédie Française, she made no attempt to disguise her emotion at the performance she witnessed. Moved now to pleasure, now to grief, she would at times appear to have forgotten the presence of the audience, and, leaning back in her chair, became lost in thought from which not even Anne of Austria could rouse her.

Though during the first days of her visit inclined to listen rather to talk, her tongue became quickly unloosed, and she was found to be good company. In spite of what was singular and bizarre in her manners and conduct, she had taken the Court by storm, and became its sole topic of conversation. Anticipations were proved to be at fault, and certain *rudes railleurs* who had laid a plot for turning her into ridicule recognised the folly of risking giving offence to a woman who manifestly enjoyed the favour of Queen,

[1] *Lettres*, t. ii., p. 254.

Cardinal, and King. She was treated as a person of importance. Madame de Longueville besought her to intercede on behalf of her brother, the Prince de Condé, and she acted as the advocate of the Cardinal de Retz, also in disgrace.

It was perhaps natural that success should have rendered her over-bold ; and her unwisdom was shown by her intermeddling in matters she would have acted more prudently in leaving alone. If Louis liked his guest, he had good reason to do so. Espousing the cause of the young lover, she would join him and Marie de Mancini, when the two were together, and volunteer advice he must wholly have approved.

"Were I in your place," she would tell the lad, "I would marry the woman I love."

No doubt Louis would have been ready to follow her counsels, but his mother and the Cardinal were to be reckoned with ; by neither would the course Christina recommended have been sanctioned, and in Mademoiselle's opinion the interference of the Queen in an affair of so much moment as the King's marriage may have contributed to hasten her departure. It must be remembered that, in view of Christina's recent offer to press Mademoiselle's own claims to Louis's hand, she may not have been an altogether unprejudiced authority. "She pleased herself greatly at Court," observes the exile, "but pleasing other people less, they told her, though very civilly, that she had been there long enough."[1]

Mademoiselle's impression that it was considered time for the traveller to depart appears to have been shared by others. "The old politician," says an English "Letter of Intelligence," "loves not so free or active a spirit so near the person of a young prince. . . . It is thought some specious pretence carrieth her suddenly out of France. It is expected

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. ii., p. 478.

her short sword should disarm both the kingdoms, and so end the war." [1]

From whatever reasons, political or private, the visit was to end, and on September 23 the vagrant went her way, "sans train, sans grandeur, sans lit, sans vaisselle d'argent, ni aucune marque roiale," [2] a last meeting taking place at Montargis between her and Mademoiselle ; who, critical though her point of view might be, was not disposed to allow the Queen to leave the kingdom without bidding her farewell.

It was late when Mademoiselle arrived at the place of tryst, and she was told that the traveller—no doubt tired with her journey—was gone to bed. Nothing daunted, and pretending ignorance of the Italian tongue used to convey the information, she insisted upon her name being taken to the Queen, and succeeded in gaining admission to her bed-chamber, where Christina was found, with no waiting-women in attendance, in an apartment lit by a single candle, her short hair concealed under a napkin which served the purpose of a nightcap, and her night-gown knotted at the throat with a flame-coloured ribbon. Mademoiselle shook her head over the scene.[3] She was also inclined to be affronted that her visit was not returned in the morning ; but, reflecting that the civility would be too much to ask of a Queen of the Goths, so far overcame her displeasure as to come and take final leave of the culprit, finding her gay, well dressed, and pretty.

"I am going to Turin," she told Mademoiselle ; "what shall I say if they talk to me there of you ?"

Mademoiselle replied with what she plainly intended as a rebuke. She did not doubt that the Queen would say nothing that was not good of her, since Madame

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. v., p. 448.
[2] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, t. iv., p. 74.
[3] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. ii., p. 479.

de Savoy was her aunt, and had ever shown her affection. Christina, no way abashed, was not to be silenced.

"Her son likes you better than she does," she answered maliciously. "For her part, she is afraid of you, because she wishes to rule."

Having thus done her best to stir up family strife she departed, three men and not a single woman, as Mademoiselle noted, sharing her coach.[1] And thus Paris and Compiègne were left to subside into calm and repose.

Her visit had been a success. It may be that when her disturbing presence was removed verdicts were reconsidered and disapproval re-awakened. It is clear from the sequel that no desire was evinced for her return to Paris; but for the moment she had triumphed over prejudice and over outraged convention, establishing her right to be regarded as an exception, exempted from the necessity of conforming to the ordinary canons of taste and conduct. Never, Anne of Austria afterwards told Mademoiselle, had she been so taken by surprise. Though she had been informed that the Queen was not like other people, she could not have imagined her to be what she was.[2] And such as she was, she appears to have liked her.

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. ii., p. 480.
[2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 478.

CHAPTER XIV

1656-57

Christina's impressions of the French Court—Her Neapolitan scheme—She visits Ninon de Lenclos—Turin and Pesaro—Her return to France—At Fontainebleau—Murder of Monaldesco.

IT is interesting to compare with the impression produced by Christina upon the French Court the impression the French Court produced upon Christina. This is to be found in a letter addressed some months later to Cardinal Azzolino,[1] every line of which bears witness to the acuteness of her powers of observation. On one point, if the general verdict of history is to be believed, she was at fault, being strenuous in professing her conviction that the tie uniting Anne of Austria and Mazarin was no other than that of simple friendship and affection. "I swear to you," she told the Cardinal emphatically, "upon all that is most holy and sacred in the world, that slander has done the virtue of this Princess wrong." If she had made extraordinary efforts to establish Mazarin's authority, it had been done merely because she recognised his fidelity and his power of serving the King. Formerly the Cardinal had need of the Queen and depended upon her; the position was now reversed. All departments of the Government and administration had become subservient to him. None had strength or capacity to oppose his power. The nobles were dissatisfied with the party leaders; Orléans was despised;

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino*, pp. 55 *seq.*

Condé respected, hated, and feared; the Cardinal de Retz had fewer friends than he gave out; the people, weary of revolt, loved the King. Of Louis himself she gave an account testifying to the care she had brought to the study of the lad. Prudent beyond his years, just, pious, and generous, he had an unusual desire for goodness and a fear of the reverse. Speaking little, he spoke to the point, and had a wonderful skill in concealing his passions, "though I am of opinion that they will never be very violent, and he will therefore have the less trouble in restraining them." He was in love with the Mancini, but with so much moderation that, during the three years he had paid her court, Christina was of opinion that he had never so much as touched her with his finger-tips. As for Marie she was witty, clever, and wonderfully well able to play the part of the *cruelle*; but, though taking pleasure in seeing one of the greatest kings in the world at her feet, "I am persuaded that she is not disposed to let him die," wherein Christina thought her in the right. Many people imagined that she was in danger of being made Queen, but Mazarin knew too well that marriage is a sovereign remedy for love to put his fortunes to so dangerous a test. Should he do so Christina believed he would be ruined. Louis's love was not of the kind that lasts—it was a love "d'enfant et de bagatelle," bearing no resemblance to a genuine passion. Should he marry, he would hate those who had taken advantage of his youth. At the present time he did not so much love as adore the Cardinal, and could not live without him. Christina dissected Mazarin himself shrewdly, though in no hostile spirit, judging him to be prudent, *fin*, adroit, professing to be a man of honour, and sometimes acting that part well enough. His master-passion was ambition; to this all other passions ministered, whilst he combined with it a mind clear, *câlin* and accommodating,

much knowledge of the world, industry, and hard work. After which she candidly avowed her ignorance as to whether his merit or his good fortune were the greater.

It was a long letter, and Christina doubted whether she would not do well to burn it, as she had done another, rather than trouble the Cardinal to read it; but, after all, it would inform him of truths he would learn with difficulty from others, since she alone would communicate these uninteresting matters to him. So the missive was sent.

Meanwhile, on leaving France, Christina had turned her steps southward. The purpose of revisiting Sweden she had entertained when quitting Rome had been quickly abandoned. The King was prosecuting his war in Poland and would not have been at home to receive her; winter was approaching, and she may well have preferred the prospect of a return to Italy. Her brain, too, was full of a project recently developed. She had always hoped, as she told Mademoiselle, for the sight of a battle-field, and her thoughts were busy with a plan which, carried out, would have given her every chance of realising her desire.

Notwithstanding the diversions filling the days passed at Compiègne, she had not omitted to turn her visit to more serious account by obtaining a sum of money, described as a gift, but more properly a small portion of the debt owed to Sweden on the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War and reserved by Christina, on her abdication, for her personal use. She had likewise, in the intervals left by court entertainments, unfolded to the Cardinal a project by which her imagination had been fired. This was the possibility, by means of French and Italian troops, of effecting the conquest of Naples, the crown of that state to be bestowed upon herself on the condition that she should name a French prince her successor.

What Mazarin thought of the adventure can only be divined. That he should refrain from open opposition to any scheme calculated to produce disquiet or annoyance at Madrid was natural, and in a temporising spirit he suggested that the countenance and support of the Pope should first be secured, confining himself meanwhile to vague and non-committing promises.[1]

Before re-entering Italy Christina had arrested her steps in order to pay a visit to the notorious Ninon de Lenclos, "célèbre," says Madame de Motteville, "par son vice, par son libertinage, et la beauté de son esprit," to whom alone, according to the same authority, of all the women she had met in France, Christina showed signs of esteem.[2]

It was at the convent at Lagny, where Ninon was confined at the moment by order of the authorities, that the meeting took place; the Queen's pleasure in conversing with the captive being so great, according to a letter of Ismaïl Boulliau, the geometrician, that she wrote to beg the young King to summon her to Court.[3] A record of the conversation would be interesting, but save that it turned upon love, and that Ninon characterised the Précieuses, then in the height of their reputation, as "les Jansénistes de l'amour," it remains matter of conjecture. So strong an impression was made upon the Queen by the wit and charm of the involuntary recluse that, volunteering her advice after her usual confident fashion, she is said to have urged upon Mazarin the desirability of completing the young King's education by throwing him into Ninon's company. Nothing save her conversation was wanting to make Louis perfect.[4] Neither the Cardinal nor the

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 60.

[2] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, t. iv., p. 74.

[3] Èmile Colombey, *Correspondance authentique de Ninon de Lenclos*, p. 197.

[4] Faugère, *Journal d'un Voyage à Paris*. Quoted in *Descartes Directeur Spirituel* (Swarte).

From an engraving.

NINON DE LENCLOS.

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Queen-mother was likely to act upon the suggestion; and the fact that Christina offered it, if true, argues a hardy indifference to their opinion.

Her visit to Ninon paid, she had proceeded on her way to Italy, her entry into Turin furnishing the occasion for one of those magnificent spectacular displays she loved. It was unfortunate that it was succeeded by a collision on a matter of etiquette between Christine of France, Dowager-duchess, and her Swedish namesake; the difficulty of precedence being overcome by a pretended illness of the Queen's, which obliged her to receive the Duchess in bed.

From Turin she journeyed southwards. Rome being still in the grip of the plague, and possibly also owing to the scantiness of resources, it was decided to defer a return thither, and by the end of November the Queen was installed in the Apostolic Palace at Pesaro for the winter, Monaldesco being dispatched to Paris to push on the Neapolitan scheme and to attempt to reclaim a portion of the large arrears of payment remaining due from France.

Her movements continued to be watched with interest and curiosity, sometimes kindly, sometimes malevolent. A letter of Gui Patin's of August 1657 is an example of criticism of the latter nature.

"The Queen of Sweden," he wrote, "is no longer at Turin or at Cazal. She is in doubt as to which saint to vow herself. She wished to go to Rome; but the plague is so violent there that it serves as a legitimate hindrance. Let her come back to France, the refuge of all *coureurs*. The Pope gives her 18,000 crowns a year *mutant cuncta vices*. Observe the vicissitudes of human affairs. The late King, her father, formerly ruined and pillaged Germany; to-day she pillages and devours the Pope, whose custom it is to devour other people. Her pretended conversion serves her as a pretext to play the pilgrim and to travel all over the

world, as she has already done, by the advice of Jesuits and Spaniards, over a good part of it. *Oh, les bonnes gens!*"

Though Pesaro was a convenient retreat, life in the little provincial town must have appeared quiet and monotonous after the events crowding the last year. The period spent there was to be no more than a breathing-time in the Queen's restless search after adventure and excitement. It had the advantage, or might have had it, if dishonesty had not prevailed amongst her servants, of facilitating the economy urged upon her by Azzolino. Whilst Monaldesco and Santinelli ruled her household and possessed her confidence, there was little chance that the advice of the absent Cardinal would be followed. With a vulgar love of display, the Chamberlain told Monsignor Lascaris, the Vice-Legate, that it was better to lack bread than guards,[1] and a Swiss guard was accordingly collected which, composed of young Italian soldiers of fortune, did not lessen the need of money always cramping the movements and troubling the mind of the Queen. One or two Italian women, with their husbands, had been added to the number of her attendants—Donna Barbara Ranzoni, elderly and plain, but "galante et fière," and Madame Orsini, so thickly painted that her face resembled an old standard. Over this nondescript Court Christina reigned, keeping up her connection with Rome by her correspondence with Azzolino, and "more beautiful and more *dévote*," wrote the Vice-Legate to the Cardinal, "than ever. Yesterday she donned a toilette of black velvet, trimmed with blue ribbons, and with a very fine masculine collar. It was a thing to turn a man's head, especially when, taking up a certain French comedy, she began to read it to me by the light of a taper."[1]

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 63.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Christina was not long content with the unexciting diversions—including the dramatic entertainments and balls she gave at the Apostolic Palace, and the society of an appreciative Vice-Legate—to be enjoyed at Pesaro. Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory vagueness of the replies brought from Mazarin by the messengers she dispatched to Paris in the hope of stirring him to greater activity, the vision of the crown of Naples was dazzling her, and she was meditating methods of realising her dream. At present, all that had been obtained from France was a sum of money as a small instalment of the payment due, and sufficing, amongst other things, to free the Queen's diamonds from pawn.

In the comparative leisure of Pesaro, Christina's thoughts turned once more to her "belle Comtesse," and she addressed to her another letter containing the assurance of her unchanging affection. Having seen all that was most charming in woman in the fairest country of the world, she was the more convinced that there were none who could compete with Ebba Sparre, and lamented the fate that was to separate them for ever: "The Sieur Baladrier will take you news of me, and, for my part, I tell you this—that I should be to-day the happiest princess in the world were it permitted that you should witness my felicity, and that I could hope one day to have the satisfaction of being of use to you. . . . Adieu, be happy, and remember me."

Five years later Ebba died, and Christina lost the one woman, so far as can be known, for whom she had cherished a veritable friendship.

Impatient of delay, and taking to heart the maxim that, if you desire that a thing should be done, you must do it yourself, Christina had arrived at the determination to pay a second visit to France. Monaldesco had failed to rouse Mazarin to action; Santinelli had

not been more successful; but the Queen had too much reliance upon her powers of persuasion not to hope that personal pressure might avail to move him in the direction she wished, and she resolved that that pressure should be brought to bear. It was true that the Cardinal showed no desire for her presence, and gave good reasons in support of his opinion that she would act more wisely in remaining where she was. It had never been Christina's custom to take advice, and by the middle of June 1657 she had set out from Pesaro *en route* for Paris.

Again Lockhart made a report to his Government of the movements of the unbidden guest. "The Queen of Sweden," he informed Thurloe, "writing a letter from Turin that she is resolved to give the King a visit, seems to surprise this Court with her strange procedure; for she enters the King's dominions without asking any other permission than to tell him she is a-coming." It was, he added, reported to be doubtful whether she would obtain leave to visit the Court.[1]

Eager to find herself once more in Paris, it may have been Christina's wisdom not to risk a refusal. By October she had reached Fontainebleau, and was there awaiting an invitation to proceed further, occupying the interval in giving her Intendant-General, Appelmann, instructions, and dispatching him to Sweden to negotiate the changes she was anxious to effect in her financial arrangements.

According to Madame de Motteville, her progress towards Paris had been arrested by orders from the Court, and she had no choice but to remain for the present a prey to *ennui*, and passing the time as best she could by setting on foot preparations for the visionary Neapolitan enterprise, and superintending the equipment of the train with which she presumably anticipated

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. vi.

taking the field in person against her former Spanish allies.[1]

Upon this scene, bearing scarcely more relation to the real business of life than a child's game of soldiers, there broke, like the harsh notes of a death-knell upon a pantomime, the sombre tragedy which has left so dark a stain upon the reputation of the woman described by Walpole as the heroic murderess.

The story of the terrible, sordid drama is confused, its proximate causes remaining enveloped in a certain degree of mystery. What is certain is that Monaldesco and Santinelli, the two chief officers of Christina's household, in both of whom she reposed unwise and unbounded confidence, were wholly unworthy of her trust. Imprudent and exaggerated in the affection she bestowed upon the men she admitted to her favour, it is not unnatural that a legend should have gathered round the actual facts, and that love and jealousy should have been believed to have played their part in what followed. But, as Baron de Bildt has pointed out, there is no foundation for this legend in fact; and in the reports sent by the Vice-Legate to Azzolino during Christina's sojourn at Pesaro not a hint is to be found of any aspirant to the affections of a woman who "loved nothing in the world except her caprices."[2] The Grand Equerry and the Chamberlain were servants and dependants, trusted and valued. Neither of them were lovers.

Whilst Monaldesco, with Ludovico Santinelli, as Captain of the Guard, had attended the Queen to France, Francesco Santinelli, filling the post of Chamberlain in her household, had been sent to Rome, furnished with money to serve for the redemption of Christina's diamonds and with orders to prepare the Palazzo Farnese for her reception on her return

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 73.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

thither. Thoroughly dishonest and untrustworthy, he executed the Queen's commands after a fashion of his own, removing the jewels from the custody of the Marchese Palombara, only to pledge them anew for his private benefit. In reference to other matters his conduct was likewise that of a man who robbed and cheated whensoever it was possible to do so. [1]

In the end, a delinquent of this kind seldom escapes detection. The betrayer was betrayed, and Monaldesco, at Fontainebleau, was made aware of the misdoings of a colleague who was also his rival in the favour of their common mistress. It remained for the Grand Equerry to turn the information to account. His path, should he desire to ruin his comrade, would have seemed to lie plain before him, since for once interest and duty pointed in the same direction ; but preferring, for reasons unknown, a more circuitous mode of action, he kept the knowledge he had acquired at first to himself. That his reticence was due to no spirit of loyalty was soon made clear by his proceeding to forge letters, purporting to be written by Santinelli and intended to fall into the hands of the Queen.

As to the nature of the misdeeds Monaldesco desired to fasten upon the Chamberlain opinions have differed. Some persons have imagined that he merely aimed at bringing, by this means, his depredations to light ; others imagine that he was attempting to charge Santinelli with aspersions upon the character of their mistress, especially in her relations with Azzolino. A third hypothesis, and perhaps a more likely one, is that he aimed at convicting him of treasonable communications with Spain. On the more important question of the veritable crime of Monaldesco's own for which Christina condemned and executed him the same uncertainty prevails. The view generally adopted in Paris, namely, that it was connected with the Neapolitan enterprise

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 75.

or with dealings with Spain which might lead to a betrayal of the secret, seems the most plausible explanation both of the violence of her indignation and of her promptitude in removing a man acquainted with her designs.[1]

Christina was still lingering on at Fontainebleau, doubtless sore and angered at the manifest unwillingness of the French Court to receive her, when the tragedy took place. It was in the Galerie des Cerfs—where Mademoiselle de Montpensier afterwards noted, with cold disgust, the blood-stains left by the struggle, "quoiqu'on l'ait fort lavée"—that the scene was laid.

Until the month of October it would appear that no doubt of Monaldesco's fidelity had occurred to the Queen; but at that time circumstances came to her knowledge causing her to entertain suspicions with regard to him, and she set herself, with caution and in silence, to confirm and verify them. Meeting treason with treason, deception with deception, she led the unhappy man to believe that his efforts to fix the guilt upon his comrade had been successful and that his own honour remained unblemished in her eyes. Monaldesco, thus deluded, fell into the trap set for him.

"Madame," he told the Queen on a certain day, "your Majesty is betrayed. The traitor must either be the absent man known to you, or myself; it could be none other. Your Majesty will shortly know which of the two it is; and I beseech you not to pardon the guilty one."

"What does the man deserve," asked Christina, "who betrays me in this fashion?"

"Your Majesty," answered the Marquis, falling deeper and deeper into the snare, "should cause him to die, without mercy, on the spot. I offer myself as executioner or as victim; for it is an act of justice."

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., pp. 74-8.

"It is well," replied the Queen. "Remember those words. For my part, I declare to you that I will accord him no pardon."

The account of the sinister interview is given in a record of the episode apparently issued or published with Christina's permission ; at this point supplemented by a second document, drawn up by the Prior of the Maturins, or Trinitarians, of Fontainebleau, an unwilling witness of what followed.

On November 6 Père Lebel relates that he was summoned to the Queen's presence. She received him alone, asked whether she had ever before spoken with him, and, upon his answering in the affirmative, added that his habit assured her she might speak to him confidentially ; making him promise, under the seal of confession, to keep secret what she was about to tell.

Ignorant of the matter to be entrusted to him, the Prior answered that, in cases of this nature, he was blind and dumb ; whereupon she placed in his hands a paper packet, unaddressed and bearing three seals, charging him to note the day, hour, and place, and to restore it to her before any witness he might choose. On the following Saturday—it was November 10—he was called upon to do so, a messenger arriving at one o'clock to summon him once more to Christina's presence. What happened when he obeyed the summons he has reported in minute detail.

That morning the Queen had decided that the time had come to take action, and had sent to bid Monaldesco attend her in the Galerie des Cerfs. Struck perhaps by some foreboding, he entered her presence pale and trembling. A change had passed over his countenance, noticed by members of the household, during the previous days, as if the shadow of his doom were already darkening above him. In his mistress's accost there was, however, nothing to confirm any fears he might have entertained ; her conversation dealt at

first with indifferent matters, nor was it until the arrival of the Prior that her purpose was declared.

As the priest entered, the door clanged to loudly behind him, causing him a vague disquiet. At the same moment the Captain of the Queen's guards, Ludovico Santinelli, with a couple of soldiers, had passed in by another door. In the middle of the gallery stood Christina and her intended victim.

"Father," she said in a loud voice as the priest approached, "give me the packet I entrusted to you, that I may read it."

The Prior having obeyed, she drew forth letters of Monaldesco's, and asked whether he recognised them; then, as he would have disowned the documents, as mere copies—

"You have no knowledge of these letters and writings?" she inquired, pausing for an answer. The originals were in her hands. As she produced them the storm burst.

"Oh, traitor," she cried, proceeding to reproach him with the betrayal of her confidence. His guilt was, in fact, fully established. Mercy, not justice, could alone save him. In his pronouncement a few days earlier he had uttered his sentence: the punishment his sin merited was death.

It may well have seemed impossible that that ultimate penalty should be exacted by a woman of whom he had been a favoured servant, admitted to the familiar intimacy of a friend. Monaldesco was not the man to accept his fate with dignity or courage, and the horror of the scene that followed is enhanced by the terror of the victim. At Christina's feet he prayed for mercy, whilst the three soldiers of the guard stood at his side with drawn swords and the Prior looked on with consternation and fear. Pleading as a man pleads when life and death are hanging in the balances, he strove to turn her from her purpose, to fix upon

others the guilt with which he stood charged ; drawing her, in his restless importunity, from one part of the chamber to another in the hope, it may be, that, could he speak with her alone, she might relent.

Christina did not refuse to listen—her patience, perhaps, lending him confidence. Since she consented to hear him, surely she would allow herself to be softened. No sign indicated her determination to cut the painful scene short. At length she spoke. The three stood together—Queen, priest, and culprit. Christina was leaning upon a round-headed ebony cane as she addressed the Prior.

"Father," she said, "bear me witness that I am not acting in haste, that I have accorded the traitor more time than he could have demanded from the person he has offended, so that he may offer what justification he can."

Justification there was, in fact, none. On the contrary, fresh proofs of his guilt were added to those already in the Queen's hands. Forced to produce the papers about his person, two forged letters were found, designed for the further incrimination of his absent colleague. Yet more than an hour had gone by before Christina pronounced sentence. Again it was to the priest that her words were addressed.

"Father," she said, "I leave this man in your hands. Prepare him for death, and care for his soul."

It would seem that even now her decision took those who heard it by surprise, startling and shocking them.

"As much terrified as if the sentence had been pronounced upon himself," Père Lebel joined with Monaldesco in imploring her for pardon. Christina was inexorable. The traitor, she said, was more guilty than those condemned to be broken on the wheel. She had confided to him, as to a loyal subject, her most important affairs, her most secret thoughts ; had

heaped upon him favours greater than she could have conferred upon a brother. As a brother she had regarded him. His own conscience should have been his executioner. It was for the priest to confess, the Captain of the Guard to execute, the culprit. To Monaldesco's entreaties that the capital sentence might be commuted to one of life-long exile from Europe, she replied it was better to die than to live disgraced.

"May God grant you mercy, as I do justice upon you," she said; and turning, left the room, parting from him for the last time, cold, implacable, severe.

A pitiable scene followed. The very soldiers were compassionate as they looked upon the wretched man in his terror and humiliation. Their Captain, Francesco Santinelli's brother, went so far as to seek the Queen, and to endeavour to move her from her purpose; but returned very sad, and said, "Marquis, think of God and your soul. You must die." Next, the Prior withdrew to make a last attempt to cause her to forgo her vengeance, finding Christina in her apartment, serene in countenance.

With a voice broken by sobs the priest conjured her, by the wounds and the sufferings of the Saviour, to show mercy. It was in vain. With courtesy and calmness, the Queen expressed her regret that she was unable to accede to his request. Monaldesco had sinned too deeply for pardon; he had no mercy to expect. Seeing that no appeal to Christina's heart or her compassion had any effect, the Prior then ventured to point out the fact that she was lodged in a royal palace, and to express well-founded doubts of King Louis's approval should it be turned into a place of summary execution. Again Christine proved obdurate. She had a right, she replied, to execute justice. Personal feeling, hatred or resentment, counted for nothing in this matter, and Monaldesco's crime was unparalleled. She was not the King's prisoner, nor

any fugitive, and was answerable to God alone. Let Père Lebel go back and care for the criminal's soul.

Embracing the culprit with tears, the Prior exhorted him to prepare for death ; and, seated on a bench in the gallery, he listened as the doomed man began his confession, interrupting himself twice by starting up with a cry as the horror of the situation overcame him anew, and ready to catch at any straw in the hope of averting his fate. The end was near. Using a mixture of Latin, French, and Italian, he was explaining himself, as best he could, to the priest, when an interruption occurred in the entrance of the Queen's chaplain, whom, as an old friend, Monaldesco had desired to see. A final effort was made to move Christina to compassion, the chaplain and Ludovico Santinelli making a last appeal for mercy, as unsuccessful as those preceding it. Nothing more could be done.

" Marquis," said Santinelli, returning, " ask pardon of God. You must die, without further delay. Are you shriven ? "

As he spoke he had pressed Monaldesco against the wall, and now he dealt the first blow. A ghastly scene followed, prolonged by the fact that the victim wore a coat of mail beneath his outer garments. Again and again he was struck ; it was some time before a mortal wound was inflicted, and not till a quarter to four was the wretched man's long death-agony over, and Christina's vengeance complete.

Such is the story, drawn from a *quasi* official document, amplified but rarely contradicted by the record of the horror-stricken priest. Baron de Bildt, whose conclusions always carry weight, explains the incident by a recurrence to his theory of Christina's abnormal physical condition, and by attributing to her the fear—the personal cowardice—to which *névrosés* are peculiarly liable : " Névrose, égoïsme, cruauté, tout

cela se tient et se suit comme les grains d'un chapelet." [1] This hypothesis receives some support from the impression made upon the Prior that, whatever might have been the case at first, Christina's refusal to listen to arguments in favour of mercy was owing to the sense that, having gone so far, the escape of her victim would have been attended with risk to herself.

It is possible to account for her conduct more naturally. Christina had been, from childhood, accustomed to regard herself as possessed of authority coming near to be absolute, and of powers of life and death over her subjects. She had never recognised the fact that, in laying down her crown, she had relinquished the rights attaching to it—the right of executing justice upon the guilty being prominent amongst them. Monaldesco, a favoured and trusted servant and a familiar friend, had been detected in a flagrant and deliberate course of treachery. Had she been still a reigning sovereign there is little doubt that his execution—like that of Essex, a traitor to Elizabeth—would have followed as a matter of course ; and Christina was incapable of perceiving that what might, under other circumstances, have been regarded as a simple act of retributive justice assumed in the present case the character of a murder—that is, an act of vengeance perpetrated by a private individual upon a man by whom she conceived that she had been wronged. The brute had indeed got the better of the woman, but it was by reason of the special circumstances that this was recognised both by her contemporaries and by posterity. The revolting details, the fact that the murder was not a judicial one, sanctioned by law—when it would have been termed an execution—but was summarily, informally, and savagely carried out, has lent to the horrible episode a colour it might possibly have escaped.

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 78.

What Christina herself thought of the incident in after-years, when passion had had time to cool, can only be conjectured. In the reflections which, after the fashion of the day, she composed upon life and conduct,[1] the conflicting claims of justice and mercy are recurrently discussed, and with varying conclusions. "A man," she wrote, "never repents having forgiven an offence; he almost always repents having punished it, however just may have been the chastisement. . . . A noble heart is incapable of vengeance when weak, and should be incapable of it when strong." On the other hand, the saying that though punishment should, if possible, wear the shape of justice, it must when this cannot be take any form it can, might be made to justify many arbitrary and vindictive acts. The truth is that abstract maxims of morality and personal conduct have little to do with one another; and it is difficult to believe Christina ever passed an adverse sentence on herself. Certainly, if she did so in the case of Monaldesco, she never took the world into her confidence.

[1] See *Maxims of a Queen*, translated and selected by Una Birch.

CHAPTER XV

1658–60

After the murder—Visit to Paris and to the Academy—Return to Rome—Coldness of the Pope—Cardinal Azzolino—Christina determines to go north—Death of Gustavus Charles—Arrival at Hamburg.

IT might have been anticipated that, the murder over and the excitement and passion of the moment past, regret and perhaps repentance would have followed. But Christina's inveterate and indestructible self-confidence, her inability to believe herself in the wrong, steeled her against remorse. Though too shrewd not to recognise the fact that, apart from any moral issues, she had seriously imperilled her relations with France at a time when Mazarin's co-operation in the Neapolitan scheme was of the last importance, she was in no humour to apologise for her high-handed proceeding; meeting protests with defiance and refusing to acknowledge that she had been guilty, if not of a crime, of a blunder.

She was not long in learning the light in which the incident was regarded at the French Court. Opinion concerning it was indeed unanimous. "These are the games of princes," wrote Gui Patin, adding that there was no one who had not taken the event ill.[1] Louis, who had been preparing to go to Fontainebleau to visit her, abandoned his intention. The scene in the

[1] *Lettres*, t. ii., p. 356.

gallery was considered not only tragic but repulsive. The vagabond guest of last year, with her brusque bearing, uncompromising directness, keen intelligence, outspoken opinions, and original manner of life had afforded a welcome variety upon the monotonous tenor of court life; but a woman guilty of an act of pure barbarism and one perpetrated, moreover, in a country where she was receiving hospitality, and in a royal palace, had placed herself outside the pale of civilised society. Etiquette and morality had alike been outraged. A man of noble blood had been brutally slain; had been put out of the way, not with quiet or decorum, by poison or any other modest and unobtrusive method, but had been *massacré*, as the phrase went; whilst Christina, under the same roof, serenely waited to hear that her bidding had been done. A storm of indignation swept over the Court, obliterating any favourable impression she had previously made, and Madame de Motteville expressed the general sentiment when she declared that the Queen had shown, by her cruelty, that her faults at least equalled her virtues; adding that the King and Monsieur blamed her; Mazarin was shocked; all were filled with horror, and those who had indulged so much esteem for her formerly were now ashamed of their praises.[1] "As I talked to the Queen of Sweden," wrote Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who had not been debarred by her disapproval from visiting her at Fontainebleau, "I thought of her deed; and the staff of the Captain of her guard, lying by her bedside, recalled to my mind the man I had seen carrying it and the blows he had struck. . . ."[2]

Mazarin had lost no time in making known the view he took of the occurrence; offering, further, the characteristic suggestion that its real nature should be

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, t. iv., pp. 100, 101.
[2] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, t. iii., p. 189.

disguised and that the Queen should ascribe the death of her Grand Equerry to a brawl amongst the members of her household. With a certain rough dignity and the straightforwardness which was one of her redeeming qualities, Christina promptly negatived the proposal and refused to disavow her deed. To Chanut, employed by the Cardinal as intermediary, she wrote, enclosing a letter to his principal, stating that she was incapable of fear or of repentance. She was not, she added, acquainted with any person sufficiently great or powerful to induce her to give the lie to her sentiments or to disown her action. "I do not," she pursued, "tell you this as a secret confided to you as a friend, but as a sentiment I am ready to declare to all the world, and which I could only be made to abjure or disguise by being deprived of life."[1] To Mazarin himself she was no less explicit. Chanut, she said, had done his best to terrify her; "but, to tell the truth, we northern folk are somewhat *farouches*, and little given to fear. . . . For my action with regard to Monaldesco, I tell you that, had I not performed it, it should be done before I lie down to-night. I have no reason to repent, and more than a hundred thousand to rejoice. These are my sentiments. If they please you, I shall rejoice; if not, I shall not cease to hold them, and shall be all my life your very affectionate cousin, Christina."[2]

That Ludovico Santinelli and the two subordinates personally instrumental in the murder should be dismissed was all the Cardinal could obtain as a concession to the outraged rights of King Louis and the general condemnation of the deed. To Francesco Santinelli Christina wrote congratulating herself and him that his

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, pp. 79, 80.

[2] Printed from the French Archives by M. A. Geffroy. Quoted in Arvède Barine's *Princesses et Grandes Dames*. The letter to Mazarin included in Lacombe's collection, and couched in terms of insult, bears every mark of being apocryphal, and is not given here.

enemy was slain, and displaying afresh the confidence in his rectitude so signally misplaced : "I send you the account of Monaldesco's death. He had betrayed me and tried to make me believe you were the traitor. I had all the information necessary to prove the contrary, nor would I do you the wrong to believe you guilty of infamies of which I could never imagine any one except himself to be capable. It suited me to seem to believe what he wished me to understand, because it was thus that you could be justified and he punished. He died at last, confessing his guilt and your innocence, and protesting that he had invented all these chimeras in order to ruin you. . . . Do not take the trouble to justify my action to any one. I aspire to be accountable to God alone ; He would have punished me, had I pardoned the traitor his immense crime. Let that suffice you. I know in my conscience that I have acted according to justice, divine and human ; that I neither could nor ought to have done otherwise. And this is all I can tell you. . . ." [1]

A letter sent by a secretary belonging to the Savoyard Legation to Turin describes the same attitude of satisfaction in the crime which had been perpetrated, the writer saying that the Queen related the incident to all who visited her, as if she had performed a great act of courage, displaying to her guests the blood-stains and the spot where Monaldesco met his death.[2]

Notwithstanding Christina's attempts to brazen out the deed, she was to be made to feel that it was not possible for a foreign visitor, of whatever rank and station, to execute so-called justice with impunity in the dominions of King Louis ; nor was it till towards the end of February that she was considered to have

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 76.
[2] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 110.

sufficiently expiated her guilt as to gain permission to visit Paris and the King. In the interval she had amused herself, if Leti is to be believed, by a scheme for crossing the Channel. In the hope of extracting an invitation from the Protector an envoy named Maldeschi was dispatched to England, with instructions to compliment its ruler, to assure him of the extraordinary esteem in which he was held by the Queen, and the pleasure it would give her to become personally acquainted with so great a hero. Cromwell was too cautious to take the bait ; and, though replying in courteous terms, the desired invitation was not forthcoming. So far the story is not improbable. It is another matter when it is asserted that the reason of Christina's desire to repair to London was not so much pure curiosity as a wish to render a service to Mazarin by inducing Cromwell to repudiate his wife and to marry a niece of the Cardinal's.

However that might be, her intention was necessarily relinquished and in February she was permitted to pay a visit to Paris, having, according to Madame de Motteville, made it difficult, by her solicitations, for the Cardinal to refuse her. The fact that she was lodged in Mazarin's apartments at the Louvre was intended as a hint that her stay was not to be of long duration, and the coldness of her reception must have contrasted disagreeably with the cordiality shown her the preceding year. Paris, nevertheless, offered compensations. Christina was privileged to watch the King dance in a ballet, attended masked balls, and went constantly to the play accompanied only by men, and picking up the first coach she met on her way there. The Court was scandalised ; yet it is fair to add that, in spite of the marked dislike entertained by Madame de Motteville for her mistress's unwelcome guest, she acquits her of any real misconduct. Had she been guilty of any, adds the lady-in-waiting, the charitable

people about the Court would not have forgotten to publish it abroad.[1]

The fact that she was, so far as the authorities were concerned, admitted to Paris on sufferance may have caused Christina to appreciate the more the attentions of the Academy ; that body appearing to have decided that the claims to consideration of a patron of art and letters were unaffected by moral issues. Her visit to it was, by her own wish, of an informal character ; but even under these circumstances the degree of importance she attached to questions of etiquette was made curiously and incongruously apparent. Ought the Academicians, she asked in a low voice, to be seated in her presence or to remain standing ? nor was it till she was assured that, from the days of Ronsard onwards, literary men had been permitted to retain their seats in the presence of the sovereign did she acquiesce in the members doing so without permission asked or obtained.

The meeting was enlivened by an incident moving those present, and especially the Queen, to laughter ; when, desiring to display a specimen of the Dictionary in course of preparation, the secretary opened his portfolio at random, and found, under the head of *Jeu*, "Jeux de Prince qui ne plaisent que ceux qui les font"—signifying games calculated to vex or wound —a definition, one would have thought, too appropriate to be gratifying.

It was interesting to attend a reception of the Academy. It was amusing to watch King Louis performing in a ballet ; and the lesser joys of plays and comedies were hard to forgo after a winter passed at Fontainebleau. Nevertheless, the Carnival was over; Lent had begun ; Anne of Austria was impatient to be quit of her guest ; and Christina had no choice save to depart. "She is gone away," wrote Gui Patin,

[1] *Mémoires*, t. iv., p. 102.

"ill pleased with the Queen; having learnt that she had said that if the Queen of Sweden did not go, she would herself leave the Louvre." [1]

In spite of disapproval, in spite of the knowledge she cannot have escaped that she was unwelcome, Christina openly expressed her regret as she prepared to say adieu to the French capital. It had cost her more, she declared, to resolve upon leaving it than to give up her kingdom.[2] France, however, was glad of her departure.

"Our greatest news," wrote Meleni, the musician, to the Duchess of Savoy, "is the departure of the Queen of Sweden for Italy; because, though the King was pleased with her liveliness, the Queen, his mother, could not endure her. She has left Fontainebleau and is repairing to Rome, to render those priests desperate." [3]

It had indeed been recognised on all hands that Christina was a troublesome guest. Alexander VII. was reported to have said, with a laugh, that the Grand Duke of Tuscany would do him a great service did he take her away from the Papal dominions,[4] but the Grand Duke was in no way desirous of laying the Church under this obligation; and to Rome the Queen was to go.

In March she sent out once more upon her travels, proceeding, by way of Fontainebleau and Avignon, to Toulon, where she embarked for Leghorn. At Sassuolo she had a meeting with the Duke of Modena, arriving at some sort of vague understanding with him with regard to the contemplated invasion of Naples. By the middle of May she had reached Rome, and had installed herself in the Palazzo Mazarin, lent her by the Cardinal.

[1] *Lettres*, t. ii., p. 383. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 115.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

If the magnificence attending her former entry into the city was wanting, she was received with courtesy, and, according to Patin, an improvement in her manners was noted. "They find at Rome," he wrote, keeping his usual unfriendly watch upon her movements, "that she has become more tractable and less proud. . . . I do not know, however, whether some kinsman of poor Monaldesco, whom she caused to be assassinated, will not pick a quarrel with her." If death did not speedily put an end to her career, it was the writer's opinion that she would have followed all trades, having already performed parts very different from that she had played at the time she had been termed the Tenth Muse and the new Sibyl of the North.[1]

Though courtesy and decorum might dissemble the fact, the wandering Queen was nowhere welcome. Her designs upon Naples rendered those whose interest it was to keep on good terms with Spain heedful lest they should incur suspicion of participation in her schemes; her normal condition of financial stress was conducive to coldness on the part of hosts apprehensive of being invited to minister both to her wants and her extravagance; and, most of all, she came red-handed from what was widely regarded as a murder.

At the present moment her pecuniary affairs were verging upon absolute lack of means. Charles Gustavus, involved in war and the expenses consequent upon war, was not in a position, with the best will in the world, to fulfil his obligations towards her; and, pending the arrival of remittances from Sweden, it was difficult to see where she was to obtain an income sufficient for her needs. The Pope had been scarcely less reluctant than her French hosts to see her established in his territory, and, though sending her a magnificent *rinfresco* in the shape of fruit, game, and all sorts of provisions, had not replied to the

[1] *Lettres*, t. ii., p. 411.

letter announcing her arrival, and declined to receive her at Castel Gandolfo, where he was then resident ; intimating, further, that her liberty would be less circumscribed did she settle elsewhere than in Rome, and adding the demands that she would quit the Palazzo Mazarin—as being distinctively French territory—and would dismiss Santinelli from her service ; causing it also to be known that, should Monaldesco's executioner leave the sanctuary afforded by his mistress's roof, he would be thrown into prison.[1] To others Alexander expressed himself still more plainly. The Queen, he told the Venetian ambassador, was a barbarian born, had been brought up a barbarian, and indulged barbarous ideas. Her pride was savage, almost intolerable, and she allowed herself to make unseemly jokes—an allusion, doubtless, to her assertion, in scoffing reference to his own gift, that the profession of war was not understood at Rome, where places were provisioned before they were besieged.[2]

A marked change had come over Alexander's attitude since he had abandoned the hope of exhibiting Christina to the whole of Europe as a triumph of grace, and the Queen's gibe pointed to the fact that she shrewdly gauged his present sentiments. But she would have done better to bridle her tongue. When, on the Pope's return to Rome, she demanded an audience, his reply was not encouraging. So soon as the time was fitting for it, he answered, he would let her know.[3] Meantime the behaviour of her servants was not conducive to cordiality, a party of her guards forcing an entrance into the pontifical palace, in spite of resistance, on the pretext of a desire to inspect the gardens, and causing alarm lest the palace itself might be sacked. Disquieting rumours got abroad as to

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia.*
[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, p. 89.
[3] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 129.

her intention of enlisting recruits, and it was increasingly felt that she was an undesirable neighbour. To dislodge her was not, however, an easy matter; and to the Pope's suggestion that she should inhabit a fortress in his dominions, accompanied by the offer of the loan of such a residence, it was said that she had replied that Rome was every one's country, belonged to no one in particular, and that, having been brought there by the Pope's consent, it was her intention to remain.[1]

This being the case, it was necessary to make the best of a bad business, and in June she was admitted to Alexander's presence, on the understanding that the audience was to be purely formal and complimentary. Conciliatory steps followed; the numbers of the Queen's guards were reduced; and valuable gifts were presented by her to the Vatican library.

Christina would have been wiser had she taken the Pope's advice and dismissed Santinelli, or moderated the blind confidence she reposed in him. His success in hood-winking her and the means he used to cover his depredations may be measured by the fact that he explained her diamonds being still in pawn by the assertion that he had been obliged to lend the money destined for their redemption to Azzolino, begging the Queen not to mortify the latter by any mention of the loan. He had further complicated Christina's relations with the Pope by gaining the affections of a great-niece of Alexander's own, the widowed Duchess di Ceri, and inducing the Queen to espouse the cause of the lovers, the Pope and his family being so strongly opposed to the projected *mésalliance* that the Duchess was forcibly removed to a convent.[2]

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 131.

[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 89; Pallavicino, *Vita di Alessandro VII.*

It was by Azzolino's interposition that better relations were finally established between Pope and Queen. The most serious matter at issue had been settled by the abandonment of the Neapolitan scheme, partly because it had become clear that it could not be successfully carried through; partly, perhaps, because, its novelty over, the Queen had wearied of it, and had replaced it by a project for forming a league of Christian princes against the Turk. She likewise, though with extreme reluctance, consented at length to defer to the Pope's wishes with regard to Santinelli, and that successful scoundrel was dispatched during the spring of 1659 to Vienna.

With what object he was sent there remains uncertain. It has been asserted that he was commissioned by Christina, in consequence of her cousin's failure to carry out his promises, to make a wild proposition to the emperor, to the effect that twenty thousand men, under the command of her old acquaintance Montecuculi, should be lent her for the purpose of invading and reducing Pomerania, in which she would retain a life-interest, the province reverting to the empire at her death.[1] But though there is nothing improbable in the proposal, it is not authenticated by actual proof, whilst what evidence remains would appear to indicate that Santinelli's mission had been of a mere formal nature.

In the meantime Christina, having made peace with the Pope, had, according to his desire, quitted Mazarin's residence, had taken possession of the Palazzo Riario, and was filling it with the furniture and treasures of art she had carried away with her from Sweden.

From this time Baron de Bildt dates the strengthening and fixing of Azzolino's ascendancy over her, maintained till the end of her life and working in it,

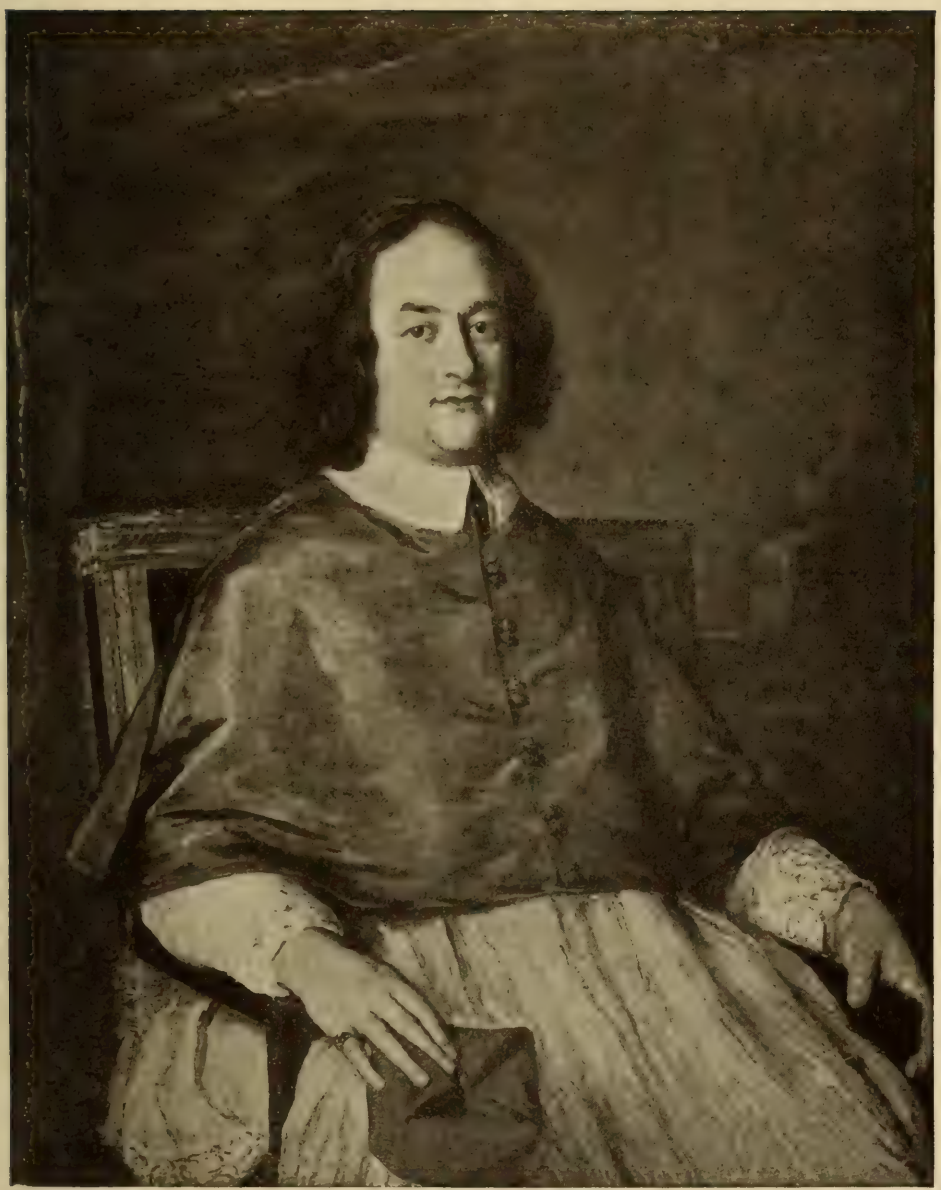
[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 29.

if not a transformation, a notable change. "Il entre en dominateur dans sa vie pour n'en plus sortir."[1] On the nature of the tie the same authority, who has had greater facilities for forming an opinion than any one else, declares himself unable to pronounce with certainty. What is indisputable is that, from henceforth, the Cardinal exercised an influence over Christina none other had ever possessed, and to which she willingly submitted.

Born in 1623, Decio Azzolino was not more than three years the Queen's senior, was handsome in person, well versed in literature, possessed a certain power of language, both in speaking and writing, and was endowed, besides, with the more intangible gift of personal attraction. As to his moral character and his abilities contemporaries differed. Nodot, the French agent, called him an "esprit de feu," capable of performing, unassisted, the work of all the other ministers.[2] His faculty for handling difficult matters and detecting intrigues had materially helped his advancement, and he was a person of importance at the Vatican. On the other hand, in a document plainly emanating from an observer acquainted with the Papal Court, he is denied any eminence in virtue or in gifts, save a pretty trick in the use of the pen, and is stated to have spent his time chiefly in love-making, with little profit to the public.[3]

Against this hostile witness, so far as his abilities are concerned, may be set the assertion of so competent a judge as Cardinal de Retz that Azzolino's intellect was one of the finest and most facile in the world. Nor is it likely that, devoid of some powers of this kind, he would either have maintained so lasting an influence over Christina or have filled the place that has been his in the estimation of contemporaries and posterity.

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 93.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 31.
[3] *Ibid.*



From a photo by Franz Hanfstængl, after the painting by Voet.

CARDINAL DECIO AZZOLINO.

p. 200]

"Il a laissé la réputation," says M. de Moüy, "d'un des hommes les plus remarquables, et aussi les plus adroits et les moins scrupuleux de la Cour de Rome au xvii^e siècle."[1]

Such as he was, Azzolino had won the Queen's affections, and he retained them. Writing in 1669, when the tie was no longer new, she said that "the Cardinal had the intellect and the cleverness of a demon, the virtue of an angel, and a heart as noble and great as that of an Alexander."

Whatever else may be thought of the connection between Queen and Cardinal, it was by his means that order was restored to her distracted household, that the men who had preyed upon her were dismissed, and replaced, in many cases, by trustworthy and loyal officials. The hard-headed, practical Italian, with a full appreciation of the value of money, had taken the arrangement of her affairs into his capable hands, and for the future her difficulties were at least far less due than formerly to dishonesty. The Pope had bestowed a pension of 12,000 crowns upon her, which, administered by the Cardinal, served to relieve her most pressing necessities; and all for a time went well. It was said that she had become more gay; that she possessed the vivacity of a Frenchwoman, the *finesse* of an Italian, the courage of a Swede, and the courtesy of a Roman. But life in her new home was not destined to remain long unbroken.

When she had last quitted Italy it had been to urge upon Mazarin the invasion of Naples. The cause now driving her forth was more prosaic and less visionary, being primarily the need of gold. Supplies from Sweden continued scanty, and, the Pope's generosity notwithstanding, money was a constantly recurrent source of anxiety.

[1] Le Comte Charles de Moüy, *L'Ambassade du Duc de Créqui*, t. i., p. 75.

She did not, indeed, covet wealth in the spirit of the miser who loves it for its own sake ; but she loved to spend it, and economy was foreign to her nature. Azzolino had the character of loving it more, and he probably concurred in her view that pressure should be brought to bear upon the authorities in Sweden to compel them to fulfil their obligations towards her. Sweden, involved in wars, had wants to supply more urgent than the payment of the sums due to the Queen ; Pomerania, whence part of her revenue was drawn, had been invaded and impoverished by the imperial troops ; and the future, viewed in its financial aspect, was increasingly uncertain. Under these circumstances, it behoved Christina and her advisers to take thought as to the methods to be employed to enforce payment. The lack of money is proverbially conducive to a low standard of conduct ; and the Queen was, unfortunately, to supply fresh proof of this fact. To the need of funds good feeling and patriotism alike gave way ; nor did she scruple to attempt to turn the situation to advantage by showing a readiness to make, in some sort, common cause with the Emperor, in the hope of thus serving her interests and those of the Church.

For any purpose of the kind it was manifestly well that her personal influence should be brought to bear ; and she had already determined to set out for Hamburg when news of the death of Charles Gustavus reached Rome, and she was confronted with the fact that she would have for the future to reckon, not with the man who owed her a throne and had never omitted to show that he retained a sense of his obligations, but with those who would control the government of Sweden during the minority of his son, a child of five years old. If her presence in the North had seemed desirable before, the necessity for it, if her interests were to be safe-guarded, had now become

imperative. It was indeed doubtful whether she would receive a welcome in her native land, and Longland, the English agent at Leghorn, gave utterance to a general opinion in writing that it was thought she would very hardly find entrance there. "'Tis believed," he added, "want of means to be a chief cause of her departure, for the Pope is weary of her. All Italians are strait-handed; they love not such converts as want money." [1]

It has been seen that generosity had not been lacking on Alexander's part, but it was not to be expected that he should maintain his expensive guest, and in any case Christina had resolved upon the journey north. By the middle of June 1660 she was once more posting across Europe, and by August 18 Hamburg had been reached; Terlon, the French diplomatist—who chanced to be in the city at the moment—meeting and escorting her to the house she was to occupy. A cordial and lasting relationship was thus inaugurated.

[1] Thurloe's *State Papers*, vol. vii., p. 896.

CHAPTER XVI

1660–61

Reluctance of Sweden to receive Christina—Algernon Sidney at Hamburg—Christina reaches Sweden—Her reception—Her claim to the reversion of the crown disallowed—Quarrels—She leaves the country.

UNDER other circumstances, Christina might have lingered in the German city and contented herself with conducting negotiations with the Swedish Government from thence; but the situation had changed since her journey had been first projected, and she had determined to visit Stockholm—a determination in no wise affected by the proofs afforded her that she would not be a welcome guest at her former capital. The conventional courtesies were carefully observed, and a letter she addressed to Duke Adolphus, the late King's brother, associated by Charles Gustavus's will with his wife in the guardianship of his son, was meant to pave the way for her return to her native country. Acknowledging the Duke's assurances of his readiness to promote a good understanding between herself and the Queen-mother, she added many salutary precepts as to the training and education of the little King. "Any other but myself," she wrote grandiloquently, "would exhort you to keep in his remembrance all I have done for him; but I protest that I hold him discharged of all his debt to me, provided he does not forget what he owes to Sweden." Expressing gratitude for the proofs she had received of the good-will of the present Government, she

proceeded to break to the Duke her intention of making a nearer approach to places where she would be less useless to the Queen and her son, and might likewise hope to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement of her affairs. "I give you these tidings," continued the Queen, "confident that you will rejoice thereat and will contribute by your good offices to my satisfaction, . . . causing me to see the good results of the promises with which I have hitherto been fed." And she hopes to be enabled shortly to return to Rome, which she is quitting with regret and solely because forced thereto by regard for her interests.[1]

In plain words, welcome or unwelcome, Christina was coming ; and if her prolonged stay in Sweden was not desired, it would be well to accelerate her departure by acceding to her demands.

Sweden, indeed, was in no wise anxious for a visit from its late Queen. The Senate, when apprised of her plans, had been, according to Terlon, startled—*étonné*—although veiling its dismay under a decent appearance of cordiality. It would have been difficult, in the opinion of the French envoy, for her former subjects not to feel veneration and gratitude, since to her Sweden owed its greatness, the King his crown, and the people in general their goods and fortunes.[2] In not a few cases they would rather have cherished these sentiments at a distance. It was, however, a difficult and delicate matter to do more than offer a courteous discouragement to the Queen's nearer approach. That so much had been done is made clear by a letter of Christina's to Count Brahe, wherein she excused herself for having failed to act upon the counsels he had given her.

"All that proceeds from you," she told him, "is so dear to me that I can be offended by no sentiment of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., pp. 37, 38.
[2] Terlon, *Mémoires*, t. ii., p. 523.

yours, . . . and I am in despair at being unable honourably to follow your advice. I hope to justify myself before long, and to show that my deference to your counsels is so great that I shall regulate my conduct by them." [1]

To M. Bååt, her own official, and Governor-General of her Swedish domains, she wrote more plainly: "Though your letter gives me to understand that it is desired that I should not come, I beg that you will justify my intentions to the Regency, and assure all good Swedes that they are wrong in deprecating my arrival." Her presence would not fail to prove of service to the State, and she would show that she desired its welfare with more love and passion than all the rest of the world put together.

Sweden took a different view. A letter from Algernon Sidney to the Earl of Leicester gives an account of the reports current at Hamburg as to her objects in visiting her native country—reports which doubtless found an echo there. Sidney had been staying at the German city, and, besides enjoying the opportunity of personal intercourse with the Queen, had heard much gossip concerning her projected journey. Some people, he said, thought that she had designs upon the crown; others that she wished to obtain the Regency; whilst there were those who said she was sent by Rome to sow discord in Sweden, and meant to marry the little King's uncle. Of all this Sidney expressed his personal disbelief. Having had much talk with her, he knew she cordially disliked Prince Adolphus, and on her abdication had warned the Senate to provide against his succession should his brother die childless. She had herself disclaimed the designs attributed to her; and Sidney believed her, not precisely on her word, but because it was clearly impossible that she should regain what she had relinquished, and

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 39.

she was too intelligent not to perceive it. Religion apart, the influential parties in Sweden liked minorities, and it would have been less difficult to effect a change during the late King's life than now.

When Sidney quitted Hamburg the Queen was awaiting replies to letters she had sent to Sweden—a very necessary precaution in the Englishman's eyes. Did she venture herself too rashly in her native country, it was his opinion that she might chance to pass the rest of her life in some castle there, instead of in her Roman palace.

Sidney's apprehensions were probably exaggerated. At all events, if risk there were, Christina resolved to run it, and presently set out for Sweden, being splendidly entertained, on passing through Denmark, by King and Queen in person, Terlon assisting at the demonstrations in her honour and being given a place in the Queen's coach when she resumed her journey.[1]

It may be that the consideration shown her by Denmark, as well as the friendliness of her relations with the representative of Louis XIV., was not calculated to reassure the authorities in Sweden, bent upon tightening the hold of a child's hand upon the sceptre ; and a final attempt to bar her path was made at Halmstadt, where she was met by a member of the Senate, Marshal Linde, who, charged with the ostensible duty of welcoming the royal guest in the name of the Queen-mother and her son, was commissioned, if possible, to induce her to reconsider her decision. A hint that practical hindrances might be interposed to her progress was received with such hot indignation on Christina's part, so many protestations of patriotism, coupled with the entreaty, worded like a menace, that she should not be compelled to indulge ideas she had never hitherto conceived, that the heads of the Government appear to have considered a withdrawal of their

[1] Terlon, *Mémoires*, p. 524.

opposition the least of two evils. Putting a good face on the matter, they therefore accorded her a magnificent reception, and on her arrival at Stockholm she was conducted by the boy-King and his mother to her former apartments at the palace, vacated for the purpose by their present owner. Establishing herself there for the present, she at once threw down the glove to national prejudice by converting one of the chambers into a chapel where Mass was said daily,[1] and may have congratulated herself upon having, so far, achieved a signal triumph over her opponents.

It would be curious to learn whether, as Christina found herself once more within the familiar precincts, old memories woke within her and stirred her to regret. Six years had passed since she had quitted Sweden, shaking its dust from her feet. For six years she had been a wanderer over the highways and byways of Europe; had tested new ways of life, had invited fresh experiences, crowding into existence all that it could be made to contain. To Sweden she had returned, not attracted thither by any awakening sense of home-sickness, any craving to look upon remembered faces or spots, but to vindicate her endangered rights. Whether it cost her a pang to feel that, having cut herself adrift with a light heart from her past, she would not be permitted to cancel the deed, that her presence in her old home was merely an embarrassment to those who filled her place, none can say. Yet it can hardly have failed to be a bitter experience to find herself a stranger where she had reigned supreme. A foreign Queen ruled in her son's name, and pre-eminent in power was the man she had first loved and then hated—Magnus de la Gardie.

The French diplomatist, Pomponne, gave, some few years later, a description of the statesman now to confront Christina as her relentless enemy. Full of

[1] Terlon, *Mémoires*, t. ii., p. 527.

natural and acquired ability, good-looking and courteous, an air of greatness and magnificence distinguished him, in the eyes of the foreign observer, from others occupying the foremost places at Court. The uncle by marriage of the little King, he knew how to turn his position to account, and was during the coming years the most powerful member, after the Queen-mother, of the Government. With him foreign ministers transacted their business, and his influence was difficult to combat.[1]

Christina was to prove it to be impossible. She will have found it hard, on this her first return to her native land, to estimate justly the forces arrayed against her. Sanguine and self-confident, it may have seemed incredible that her power was a thing of the past ; and Pomponne, looking back, was of opinion that, by the line of conduct she pursued at this juncture, she had forfeited—for herself and for her Church—the opportunity of accustoming the nation, with care and caution, to the idea of liberty of worship.[2] But discretion was never a quality abounding in her ; nor did she, in other matters besides religion, fail to make it quickly apparent that the apprehensions of those responsible for the welfare, present and future, of the country at large were not altogether unfounded. It was, no doubt, Christina's primary object to set her financial affairs upon a satisfactory footing and to obtain from the Regency and Senate a confirmation of the decrees which, passed at the time of her abdication, secured to her the rights and revenues she had then retained ; and, so far as the acknowledgment of the justice of her demands was concerned, she was likely to obtain what she wanted. Though a party in the Estates—notably the Order of the Clergy—were disposed to assert that by her change of religion she had rendered the engagements

[1] Pomponne, *Mémoires*, t. ii., p. 62. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 174.

taken with regard to her by the country null and void, and that whatever should be accorded her would be by reason of her race and ancestry, the responsible Government was, on the whole, prepared to take a more generous view, and to ratify the arrangements made in 1654. It was an altogether different matter when, in contradiction to the stipulations insisted upon at her abdication, by which it had been made irrevocable and final, the Queen presented to the Senate and Estates a written document declaring her right, in the event of the little King's death leaving no male heirs, to the reversion of the crown. Under other circumstances the claim, though set aside, might have roused less strong feeling; but the fact that the occupant of the throne was a delicate child rendered it a matter of immediate and pressing importance to show that any pretensions on Christina's part to the succession would be disallowed. Within an hour the deed was sent back to her, and three days later it was formally rejected, a fresh act of renunciation being exacted rendering her abdication, as before, absolute. For Christina no repentance was to be possible, and her present action had only served to accentuate hostility. The scene when de la Gardie, with other officials, presented her with the decree of the Diet was marked by anger on her part, perhaps of ill-concealed triumph on his;[1] nor was it singular that the incident should have added to public disquiet and have strengthened the conviction that her presence might prove an element of disturbance to the realm. Her partisans were not few; the repose of the kingdom was at stake; and it was felt that the sooner she left it the better. Members of the Diet were forbidden to wait upon her; and it was probably as much with a view to curtailing her visit as owing to religious intolerance that her chaplain and her other Italian servants were forced to quit the

[1] Pomponne's *Mémoires*, t. ii., p. 476.

country, leaving her dependent upon the ministrations of Terlon's attendant priest.

It could scarcely have been expected that Christina should tamely submit to treatment of the kind in a land she had ruled; and her temper was further irritated by a document which fell into her hands, wherein the Bishop of Abo, after enumerating the causes of complaint against her, went on to paint an imaginary picture of her regrets for the religion she had abandoned.[1] In a characteristic letter to the King, Christina protested against the aspersions thus cast upon her reputation; stating that, though opportunity would not fail her to take personal vengeance upon her episcopal detractor, respect for his Majesty induced her, instead, to have recourse to the royal authority: "Being then entirely convinced that your Majesty will be indignant that a like person has been so bold as to spread abroad matters wounding to the honour and respect due to me. . . . I pray your Majesty most tenderly that you will be pleased to take to heart this insult offered to my person and my honour, in order that this Bishop may suffer an exemplary punishment for his crime. . . . But should I, contrary to my expectation, be so unfortunate as not to be able to obtain sufficient satisfaction by your Majesty's ordinance, I beseech you not to find it strange should I myself draw upon this Bishop a vengeance proportionate to his crime and to the insupportable dishonour he has attempted to do me."[2]

It is impossible not to feel that, had the Bishop of Abo been, like Monaldesco, in the Queen's power, a second tragedy might have taken place. Under the circumstances, though the Bishop was called to account, no evil consequences appear to have ensued, and he probably escaped with a perfunctory reprimand.

A somewhat similar passage of arms appears to have occurred between the Queen and a certain Doctor

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 50. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., pp. 49–52.

Eric, holding the post of Court chaplain, to whose inquiry as to her reasons for a change of religion she replied bluntly that he and his sermons had caused it, the doctor having ventured to declaim against certain of her practices at a time when she was still upon the throne. For the rest, she added, she had never been a good Lutheran.[1]

Christina was in no humour to accept humiliations meekly, and she wrote from Nyköping, where the winter had been spent, to express to her Governor-General indignation at the hindrances interposed in her exercise of a religion permitted to foreign envoys. The Senate was to be reminded that upon King and State would rest the shame, should she suffer an affront. "Remind them of their own honour," she wrote, not without dignity, "and let them remember that, however unfortunate, never can I be their subject. My goods and my life I yield to them, asking no other grace than to be permitted to leave Sweden without seeing my honour wounded and the rights of nations—rights so sacred in a person of my condition—violated. Let them take my own life and that of my servants," she reiterated, "and let them remember that death would be less painful than dishonour. . . . In God's name, prevent the Swedish nation from rendering itself abominable by so unworthy an action as that of failing in respect towards a Princess who has not deserved it. But, in God's name, make haste to send me my money, so that I may quickly quit a country where I am so cruelly persecuted."[2]

It was manifestly to the advantage of all that Christina should go, and, having performed her religious duties at Easter with a publicity savouring of bravado, and obtained not unsatisfactory financial pledges from the Government, she departed, carrying away from her native land, it is to be feared, little except bitterness and disappointment.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 283. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 59.

CHAPTER XVII

1661–5

Christina at Hamburg—Return to Rome—The Duc de Créqui's embassy—Quarrel between France and Rome—The Queen as mediatrix—The question of nepotism—Peace re-established.

AT Hamburg, whither, on leaving Sweden, Christina returned, she spent a year. It is one presenting few features of interest. Money was still scarce, and continued to be an absorbing subject of pre-occupation, an arrangement being made by which her resident-agent in the town, the Jew, Texeira, became administrator of the funds transmitted from Sweden. For the rest, Hamburg, like other places, possessed sages to be patronised, and, in one case—that of Peter Lambecius—to be converted. The philosopher had had reason to be discontented with his native town; his scholars were insubordinate, his critics hostile, going so far as to charge him with heterodox, and even atheistical, opinions. Worse than all, he had, when or after Christina appeared upon the scene, contracted an unfortunate marriage with a rich but miserly lady. Under these circumstances, he lent a willing ear when the Queen suggested a means of escape from both wife and surroundings—namely, that he should embrace the Catholic faith and seek a refuge elsewhere, which he accordingly did.[1]

Christina was not content without endeavouring to exercise her influence in a wider field, and during her

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 70.

residence at Hamburg she was eager in the attempt to induce the Catholic Powers to bring pressure to bear upon Hamburg and Denmark in order to obtain liberty of worship for Catholics. France, Spain, Poland, and the Emperor were all solicited in turn to join in making an effort in this direction, but proved for the most part lacking in zeal, and in the end this scheme, like others, was abandoned. By May 1662 she had quitted Hamburg, and a month later was once more at Rome.

On June 20, 1662, the Pope gave two audiences. The one was to the Duc de Créqui, ambassador from France, with which country diplomatic relations had been lately resumed, after some years of interruption. The second was to the vagabond Queen, newly arrived from her travels, and hurried by the Cardinals who had met her upon the outskirts of the city into the presence of Alexander—a strange little figure, road-stained and dishevelled, her dusty hair knotted with vari-coloured ribbons, and wearing her usual masculine *juste-au-corps*. A transparent skirt, allowing the breeches beneath it to be seen, constituted her sole sign of feminine attire.[1] And thus Christina inaugurated her third visit to Rome.

Like all other periods of her life, it was to be marked by a spirit of restless activity; by projects adopted and relinquished; by a determination to make her voice heard in European affairs. Uncrowned, sceptreless, with ever-recurrent financial difficulties, and a marked faculty for falling out with the Governments who showed her hospitality, the Queen might reasonably have been regarded as a negligible quantity in international politics. Yet the curious fact remains that, not only according to her own inordinate estimate of her importance but in the opinion of others, this would appear not to have been the case, and it is evident that the

[1] Rasadonna's dispatch, quoted in *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 112.

Powers at strife between themselves found it worth their while to conciliate her good-will, and would have been reluctant to incur her enmity. Her connection with Azzolino, prominent amongst the "flying squadron" at the Vatican which maintained an attitude of neutrality towards France and Spain, contributed, no doubt, to render her amity of moment; but, independently of this, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus was fully capable of asserting her position.

Nor would she have been content to retire into private life. "On dirait plutôt qu'elle n'avait abandonné les affaires de la Suède que pour s'occuper de celles du monde." [1] On her arrival at Rome a scheme was seething in her brain—ever fertile in such projects—for collecting subsidies from the Christian princes of Europe for the purpose of assisting Venice in her struggle with the Turks; and Count Gualdo, as her representative, was dispatched, with credentials from her, to visit the various Courts, cities, and Powers who were to be invited to contribute to this object. The main result appears to have been that the Count made an agreeable tour of Europe free of expense, and by the time he returned to report the total failure of his mission the novelty of it had worn off and Christina had already practically abandoned the enterprise.

In Rome itself a new field for the exercise of her energy had been afforded by a dispute between the Vatican and the French ambassador. Originating in trivialities, it soon assumed formidable proportions. From the Duc de Créqui's first arrival difficulties had been encountered in arranging matters of etiquette to his satisfaction. Créqui insisted that it was due to his dignity that the first visit should be paid to him by Cardinal Chigi and the other relations of the Pope who occupied important positions at the Vatican. He likewise asserted his right to a *fauteuil* when paying his

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 112.

respects to Christina—a privilege she, supported by Azzolino, refused to allow. Complaints were made to Louis and to his minister, Lionne, and the Queen, in her usual impassioned language, conjured the former to take order with his ambassador. Confident in the King's justice, she declared herself ready to accede to his desires, protesting that the deference she showed him, more than to any other prince in the world, was rendered to his person and his merits, not to his position. The appeal was effectual: Louis took Christina's part as against his envoy, and this preliminary skirmish was settled in her favour.

More was, however, to follow, and a serious affront to be offered to France and its King, in the person of his ambassador. A quarrel had taken place between Créqui's servants and the Pope's Corsican guard; an affray ensued; the Farnese Palace, where the Duke was lodged, was besieged and fired upon, the envoy himself being on the balcony at the time; and shots were likewise directed at his wife's carriage, a page in attendance upon her being killed.

The matter would have been grave enough in any case. It was rendered the more so by the strained relations existing between France and the Holy See; nor was Louis's protest couched in conciliatory terms. The Pope, wrote the King, had so long been in the habit of refusing him all things, and had testified so much aversion towards him, that he left it to His Holiness to offer explanations of the occurrence, and of his intentions with regard to it, "hoping only that they will be such as to oblige us to pray God to preserve you, most holy Father, in the government of our mother, the holy Church."[1] In the meantime Louis's own intentions were made clear by the seizure of Avignon and the orders issued to his troops to march upon Italy.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 73.

Matters were in this condition when Christina threw herself, with her usual eager impetuosity, into the breach. From the first she had taken a lively interest in the affair, and, exerting herself in the interests of peace, informed Azzolino that her counsels had great weight with the Pope, and she would use her influence in a fashion to show to the Pope and King who she was. Upon the Cardinal she pressed the importance of inducing Alexander to give the offended sovereign the satisfaction he demanded. "Some of the Corsicans must be sacrificed," she observed easily, "and if the guilty are not found, even the innocent must be punished, to make it clear that they are not protected, and that no deceit is used to save them. What I say may seem to you terrible, but extreme evils need corresponding remedies."

Innocent and guilty alike appear to have escaped, and no reconciliation was effected. The Pope was plainly unwilling to give Louis further satisfaction; and Christina, calling on Madame de Créqui, told the Duke that he would do well to be content with what had been done; that nothing was to be got from priests, and what they would give must be accepted in payment.[1]

The attitude she recommended was not one to be assumed by Louis XIV. or his ambassador, who, it may be mentioned, had already declined the Queen's offer to act as mediatrix, well aware that his master would entrust to no one the care of his interests.[2] By September the Duke had quitted Rome, nor was it until eighteen months later that peace was finally made, and Cardinal Chigi was sent to offer the Pope's apologies at Paris.

Christina had not desisted, in the meantime, from her endeavours to promote a better understanding. Blood as vile as that of the Corsicans, she told Louis, would in

[1] Moüy, *Ambassade du Duc de Créqui*, t. i., p. 303.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

no wise serve as reparation for the offence committed against him ; and in November her French secretary, Alibert, was sent to Paris, the bearer of her protestations of affection and service, conditional upon her duty towards the Church.

Louis's reply was, to say the least, dry. He expressed his regret that she should have taken the trouble to send Alibert to Paris on a matter not worth his care. For the rest, "I know it is just that persons of your station should in no way restrain themselves ; and on those occasions when you are willing to give me tokens of your affection I shall much value them. . . . In the event of other interests being dearer and more important to you than mine, I shall only complain of my evil fortune. . . ."

Nine months later the correspondence was still being carried on, Louis's tone having acquired an increased acidity. Detecting a change in the Queen's language, he compared it unfavourably with that she had employed at the beginning of the dispute, and referred in particular, not without sarcasm, to her suggestion that the recollection of the insult he had received should be erased from his memory. "Had your Majesty," he added, "received some ill treatment in the person of the least of your servants, incomparably less outrageous, I am certain that you have too much spirit and love of glory to follow the advice you give me to pass the sponge, as you say, over this disagreeable picture." [1]

Louis was undoubtedly right. It is easier to offer counsels of perfection than to follow them, and it had not been Christina's practice to exhibit herself as a model of patience. If the cordiality between her and Louis had undergone sensible diminution the fact may have been counterbalanced by the increased friendliness of the Pope, who about this time did

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 74.

Photo by Giraudon, Paris, from the original painting in the Louvre.

LOUIS XIV.

p. 218]

her the unusual honour of paying a visit to her palace and showed her singular favour. Alexander may have been actuated by the necessity of propitiating public opinion and of disarming possible critics by kindness ; for the scandals attaching to his excessive practice of nepotism had created a strong feeling in Rome and elsewhere, to which the protest addressed to him by Cardinal Sacchetti gave expression. The fact that the writer had risen from his death-bed to make his impassioned appeal lends to his words an added pathos, as he administered a solemn rebuke and warning to the Pope. In spite of pledges given in Conclave and elsewhere, and treading in the path marked out by those who had caused so great scandal to the world and desolation to the nations, Alexander had called his kinsmen to Rome, to squander the patrimony of Christ and to suck the blood of his unfortunate subjects, and was now risking a war with France on account (according to ill-disposed people) of a visit refused by Louis's ambassador to these kinsmen.

If the Cardinal had little hope that his remonstrances would prove efficacious, he had delivered his own soul. In Christina's reply to the letter in which Louis had charged her with undue indulgence towards the offenders against his rights and privileges, she too took the opportunity of expressing her views upon the question then prominent at every Catholic Court.

" I will not attempt," she wrote, " to justify to you the nepotism concerning which you display so much indignation. I will, indeed, say to your Majesty that the nephews of this Pope are not undeserving of their good fortune, and that I make excuses for them if they do not allow Fortune, blind and fickle as she is, to escape out of their hands without making her pay a ransom for the liberty she will one day assert in betaking herself elsewhere. I should have desired, like you, that God had bestowed upon the Pope

sufficient strength to do without them. Since it is his will to have them, I consider that it is for us to suffer in him, as in many others, this proof of human nature ; nor are we permitted to apply remedies worse than the evil itself. . . . Give me the joy of cultivating your friendship without fear of injury to my duty towards the Church. As nothing could make me fail in that duty, so nothing can detach me from the affection I have vowed you."[1]

Christina had solid reasons for fearing a breach with Louis, lest his powerful influence should be brought to bear upon the Regency at Stockholm and should cause her further financial embarrassment. At one time this appeared likely to be the case. As sometimes chances to mediators, Christina was left out when the King's reconciliation took place with Rome, and it was not until the summer of 1665, three years after the opening of the dispute, that peace was finally made, Louis declaring, in a cordial letter, his satisfaction in the re-establishment of terms of affection between himself and the Queen, and, as a further proof of good-will, expressing his readiness to forget, for her sake, all his causes of complaint against Azzolino.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 77.

CHAPTER XVIII

1665–6

Life at Rome—Swedish converts—Letters to Bourdelot—Financial difficulties—Christina goes to Hamburg—Letters to Azzolino—Hostility and distrust on the part of the Swedish Regency—Illness of Alexander VII.—Obstacles to Christina's return to Sweden.

CHRISTINA'S happiest years were probably spent at Rome. Her youth was past, middle age was upon her, but in the southern city her heart had found a home. In turning her back upon Sweden she had felt, as far as can be known, not a regret. When Rome was to be quitted, though only for a season, it was with tears and mourning. To her new habitation she was anchored by the single strong and durable affection of her life. Where Azzolino was, there, to Christina, was home and resting-place.

During the years following her first visit to Hamburg she appears to have settled into the manner of life she found most congenial. Side by side with her attempts to compose the differences between France and the Vatican, with projects of an international nature, ran what may be called her private and personal interests, social, literary, and artistic. Under Azzolino's direction the disorders in her household had been reformed, the Pope had again become friendly, the Roman nobility had consented to forget their grievances and frequented her miniature Court. She had also resumed the studies of her girlhood, including, in especial, that of alchemy, in fashion at the time. A

distillery was established under her roof and opened out golden possibilities to the votaries of the science.

The one drawback to her present mode of existence continued to be lack of money. Her lavish generosity, no less than her personal extravagance, was at all times apt to land her in difficulties. She liked to spend, and funds were wanting. Eager in her desire to make converts of such of her countrymen as crossed her path, the Swedish law enacting that those who abjured Protestantism should, after five years, forfeit their property, can scarcely have failed to produce demands upon her purse to which it was difficult for her to respond.

"My will is not wanting," she said on one of these occasions; "it is money I lack. If God gives it to me I will give it to others."[1] Not unfrequently, however, good-will was all she had to bestow.

Amongst the Swedish converts, her secretary, Davidson, had been prominent. Sent to Sweden during the lifetime of Charles Gustavus to collect the Queen's revenues on the spot, his religion had interposed difficulties in the performance of his duties, the King having refused to admit him to his presence unless he should declare, upon oath, that he was not a Catholic. Christina's letter to him on this subject is too characteristic an example of her treatment of subordinates to be omitted.

"I believe you so little fitted to be a martyr," she wrote, "that I should advise you not to expose yourself to the danger of saving your life by an act of cowardice. Honour and life are two things, it seems to me, that deserve care. Should you chance to deny or disguise your religion you would save neither, if afterwards you should enter my presence. . . . Be not affrighted by the threats of the King of Sweden. Do without seeing him, and return to me; . . . but return

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 264.

having done nothing base and timid, and bring proof that you have lived as a true Catholic." Coming in this guise, she would receive him with joy, share her last piece of bread with him, and die sooner than give him no assistance. If, however, he permitted himself to be moved by fear or hope from his duty, let him be sure that, were he under the protection of the King himself, she would know how to reach and punish him with death.[1]

Davidson had returned to Rome, had remained faithful to Christina, and his death about this time deprived her of a servant she could ill spare. Unconscious of his precarious condition of health, he had been fulfilling his customary duties, when the Queen, uneasy at his ignorance of his approaching end, addressed a warning to him in the form of a note she contrived should fall into his hands as he sorted her letters.

"You are more ill than you believe," it ran. "Think of the salvation of your soul, and prepare for death. Even should you recover, this will do you nothing but good."

The notification may have been dangerously startling to a sick man. At any rate, the Queen's diagnosis proved correct, and a few days later Davidson was dead.[2]

Time reverses many judgments, and a couple of letters belonging to the year 1665—the one apparently dispatched, the other, on second thoughts, kept back—addressed to her old doctor, Bourdelot, indicate the disenchantment she had undergone on the subject of the quack physician she once considered had saved her life.

"As my only answer to your impertinent letter of the 2nd *ultimo*," she wrote, "I will tell you that I am still young enough to laugh at those who are younger

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 228. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iii., p. 264.

than I am, and that I am as decided in my sentiments, and as sensible, as others ; that I am less tolerant of outrages ; that I attend to my own business and have always done it very well. . . . As for the honours rendered me in France, they are my due ; and I know myself to be worthy of greater ones. My pride may surprise you, but if you were well acquainted with me you would be convinced that I always repay with interest what I am lent. I care little for all they may say of me, so long as I cannot on this occasion be truly reproached with a baseness unworthy of my spirit, of which I should have a very low opinion were I not conscious of something in it greater than Fortune bestows upon her greatest favourites. For the rest, I am full of health and vigour, and am resolved to enjoy the Carnival. Thus you may answer those who dictated your letter and who ask you for news of me."

The second letter, apparently not sent, deals with the subject of her second projected visit to Sweden. Doubts—not unfounded—had been raised as to whether it would be accepted by the authorities at Stockholm. Affecting a confidence she can hardly have felt, Christina informed her correspondent that no one in Sweden was great or powerful enough to give her permission to return thither. She had but to ask and receive that permission from herself.[1]

The question was soon to become a practical one. It would seem that she was destined never to remain long in one place. In the first instance her restless spirit had driven her forth to seek novelty and adventure ; and now that she might have been content to stay where she was, hard necessity was to dictate her course. It was becoming increasingly plain that her presence was needed, if not in Sweden itself, at least in some locality whence communication with Stockholm would be more easily carried on than from

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 266.

Rome. Neither she nor Azzolino was disposed to underrate the importance of this world's goods; and for Christina not the luxuries of life alone were at stake, but freedom from the pressure of actual lack of means.

In Sweden there was a wide diversity of opinion as to the course proper to be pursued towards its former Queen. Although Wrangel, a member of the Regency, was her friend, that body, dominated by Magnus de la Gardie, her former favourite, unforgetful of his wrongs, was hostile to her; the Senate being also, in a lesser degree, unfavourable. Amongst the four orders of the realm, on the other hand—Nobles, Clergy, Bourgeois, and Peasants—she counted a large number of partisans; so that it was thought that, should the Diet be called together, it might concede her monetary demands, and, further, give its friendly consideration to that claim of freedom of worship disallowed by the Regency, and, more reluctantly, by the Senate.

In consequence of the political condition of Europe in the year 1666—of the war in progress between England and Holland, of the French, Danish, and Dutch league, of the indecision prevalent in the Swedish Regency as to the most prudent course and its urgent need of money, it was confidently expected that the Diet would shortly be summoned to meet. Should this be the case, it was all-important, in the opinion of the Queen's friends, that she should be at hand, to use the opportunity of pressing her demands upon the only body likely to listen to them. For this reason it was determined that she should once more set out upon her travels.

The decision must have caused her sharp regret. She was leaving the haven she had just reached, was again launching out upon the open sea, and this at a period of life when unknown paths have lost much of the attraction they offer to youth. Whether she would

be so much as admitted to Sweden was, in spite of her vaunted independence, more or less doubtful, and, did she succeed in making good her right to revisit her native land, she must have known, even better than on the previous occasion, that her presence would be endured rather than welcomed by those at the head of the Government, in whose eyes she had become a person suspect. By some of her countrymen she was regarded as an emissary of the Pope, charged with the duty of caring for his interests ; by others she was credited with designs upon the reversion of the crown ; by all she would be jealously watched ; her liberty, whether of action or of worship, would be curtailed ; enemies would surround her, ready to put sinister interpretations upon her conduct ; above all, she would be at a distance from the counsellor and friend upon whom she had learnt to lean as upon her chief support in life. The duration of her absence was uncertain, dependent upon circumstances beyond her control ; nor was it strange that she set out upon her wanderings with a heavy heart.

At Trent, on her way north, she fell in with the Marquis del Monte, who, banished from the Papal States on account of some offence, threw himself upon her protection, was received by her into her household, and continued in her service until his death. A gambler, of indifferent character and reputation, del Monte was possessed of certain gifts commending him to the Queen. He was well born and good-looking, and knew when to speak and when to be silent.[1] Such as he was—and though slander may have magnified his sins it can scarcely be doubted that he was no desirable addition to her train—he insinuated himself into Christina's confidence, and she remained attached to him until the end.

From Trent the Queen had proceeded on her way to

[1] *Histoire des Intrigues galantes de la Reine Christine*, p. 26.

Hamburg, her present destination. The long journey accomplished, and installed in the German city, she was forlorn and desolate enough. Lonely and sad, the landmarks of her existence were represented by the arrival of the weekly courier from Rome. The miscarriage of a letter was a tragedy, and her chief solace was found in writing to her absent friend.

The series of these letters, printed by the Baron de Bildt,[1] is invaluable to the student of Christina's life, not so much as supplying a chronicle of the two years passed at Hamburg, marked by few events of any importance, as because they portray the Queen in totally new colours, and cast a fresh and illuminating light upon her many-sided character. The woman who, week after week, pours out her soul to Azzolino, is curiously and strikingly different from the Queen who confronted the world, defiant, arrogant, self-assertive, confident; at once bidding for the suffrages of the multitude and despising the audience to which she appealed; contemptuous of the blame of those who condemned, credulous of flattery; clinging to a sovereignty she had renounced, jealous of the least infringement of her rights; proud of her gifts, proud of her sacrifices, proud of her religion; vain, impulsive, inconstant, and ruled by caprice. Such she appeared to Europe; nor was it a false presentment of one side of her nature.

To Azzolino she showed another, and one strangely at variance with it. In her letters, intended for no eye but his, the woman is unveiled. Sovereignty, self-confidence, independence, have slipped from her like a cloak; she stands before the man who had won her affection stripped of the royal prerogatives she prized so much, docile, submissive, ready—even anxious—to defer to his wishes and to make his standard of right and wrong her own. The shrewdness, the clear-sighted-

[1] *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino.*

ness, are still apparent, but above and beyond her judgment she places that of another ; and in spite of fears, in spite of the change in his sentiments she sorrowfully recognises when the ardour of a first friendship has had time to cool, she remains grateful for what he bestows, finding in him her one human support. "I will take every possible care to carry out your instructions," she writes, and it is her attitude throughout. "I hope," she tells him humbly, on another occasion, "that you will pardon my zeal the faults of my ignorance, and that you will find I have pledged you to nothing, and have kept to the terms you prescribed. I long to hear either that you approve of what I have done, or that you forgive it."[1] Did Azzolino commend her, all was well, and the opinion of the rest of the world counted as nought in the balance.

Of the nature of the relationship thus established it is difficult, taking the time and its customs into account, to hold any view but one.[2] Yet there are passages in Christina's letters which may be allowed to throw doubt upon this interpretation of the tie. Writing in the November following her arrival at Hamburg, she makes scornful allusion to calumnies circulated in Rome, and plainly intended to discredit Azzolino. They had, she tells him, in no wise disquieted her. The truth should not be offensive ; lies might be treated with contempt. Had she been at Rome, she would have been prepared for what was said. What surprised her was that she should be remembered during her absence, and at a time when

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 224.

[2] It is curious to find that even the anonymous author of the scurrilous *Intrigues galantes de la Reine Christine* has no proof to bring forward against her; adding, after retailing the current gossip: "Voilà ce que la médisance a publié d'une intrigue qui n'a point de tesmoins que les deux personnes intéressées ; mais on prétend avoir des raisons qui ne permettent pas de douter de la chose et c'est ainsi qu'on en parle dans le monde " (p. 15).

Azzolino was not yet eligible for the Papacy—"*papable*." It was early to begin. Whatever was said of her, it would always be less than was said of all persons of her rank who were before the world, and she regarded the slanders of Santinelli and men of his type in the light of panegyrics. Let Azzolino do the same.[1]

Whatever might be the nature of the Cardinal's hold upon her, his will was law; and in deference to his opinion—in which she concurred—she remained at Hamburg, in the hope of bringing her influence to bear upon the Diet, so soon as it should assemble. But her heart was ever turning, with impatient longing, towards Rome. "Others may describe Hamburg to you," she wrote in July. "I can tell you nought, save that I am terribly dull, and that the moments I pass here seem like centuries. I see clearly that to whatever part of the world I may go, life out of Rome will be unendurable."[2]

Nor was her opinion of her environment flattering to her hosts. As the summer went on her health had shown signs of failing; and, in deference to Azzolino's recommendations, she had given up her books. But, reading apart, what was there to do? The country was horrible; everything in it displeasing and tiresome. Whereas, elsewhere, twenty-four hours went to make up a day and night, there one hour lasted for twenty-four days and nights. At Rome a day passed like an hour; at Hamburg it lasted a century. For the natives she expressed her frank detestation. Better be a heretic than a German. A heretic might be converted; but a fool could never become a wise man. "I am afraid of contracting the atmosphere of the country. I see Italians who do so, and it makes me fear it is contagious."[3]

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 271. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 231.

Though the delay in her journey to Sweden was a matter to her of profound regret, deferring as it did her return to Rome, it was clear that the time was not come for her to repair to Stockholm. Were the Diet to assemble, and were she to be guaranteed the free exercise of her religion, she would proceed on her way; but the summoning of the Diet was indefinitely postponed, nor did the Regency show any disposition to relax the severity of its requirements in the event of her visiting Sweden. Under these circumstances she had no alternative but to resign herself to stay for the present where she was. "I entreat you to believe," she wrote to Azzolino, "that the cruel necessity compelling me to put this force upon my inclination is unendurable to me beyond all you can imagine. . . . I shall be too happy if I am permitted to see you once more before I die." [1]

In one respect an improvement had been effected in her affairs. The officers in charge of her interests in Sweden had proved in various degrees unreliable, now playing into the hands of the Government, in the hope of obtaining posts or advantages for themselves, now arranging matters with an eye to their personal profit rather than that of their absent mistress. An honest man named Adami, Captain of her Swiss Guards, had recently been despatched to inquire into matters on the spot, and had succeeded in developing a scheme for farming her revenues, by which her income would be rendered more stable and regular. On the other hand, the Regency had taken the formal step of returning an explicit refusal to the demand she had made to be permitted liberty of worship in her native land; Christina instantly retorting by directions to Stropp, in charge of her affairs at Stockholm, to make the matter as public as possible, laying stress at the same time upon her affection for her country, so that all her com-

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 193.

patriots might be aware of the tactics of a government which, using religion as a pretext, sought to exclude her from a kingdom once her own.

A fresh cause of distrust had been supplied to the Regency by the cordiality of Christina's present relations with the French Court. More than one cause had contributed to render Louis anxious to cultivate the Queen's friendship. European politics had been complicated during Christina's residence at Hamburg by the serious illness of the Pope ; and it had become important for the rival Powers to secure adherents who would protect their interests at the Vatican, and, in case of Alexander's death, would obtain the election of a pontiff favourable to their views. As the leader and chief of the neutral party amongst the Cardinals, it became of special moment to conciliate Azzolino ; and, whilst marked civility had been shown to him personally by Louis, it was thought well, in view of the approaching crisis, to propitiate Christina, identified with him in the public eye. Nor had she, though not without doubts of Louis's good faith, been backward in responding to his advances, expressing her desire to render him any services that should become possible in Sweden. The King, in acknowledging her offer, wrote that her good offices could do no more than increase his satisfaction in being of any use to the Cardinal, whose merits had already raised him to a place to which nothing could be added.[1]

Meantime, whilst politicians were devising means of turning the expected election at the Vatican to their own advantage, those who had the wider interests of the Catholic Church at heart were likewise looking anxiously on to the future. Christina's devotion to the Church of her adoption was ardent. Whether or not she was religious in the sense of a personal relationship established or striven for between the soul and God,

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 218.

may be doubted. The evidences of it are chiefly to be found in her writings, such as the preface to her fragment of autobiography. That she was sincere in her loyalty to the Church which she regarded as representing God on earth is clear; she had its spiritual as well as its material welfare in view, and to her, as to others, the reign of the present Pope had left much to desire. If to the indignant Louis she might excuse the advancement of Alexander's family on the score of the frailty inherent in human nature, there was no disposition on her part to minimise the evil, and her letters to Azzolino gave plain expression to her feelings on the subject. The ill had reached dimensions so dangerous that, should no remedy be found, the plague would prove mortal to the Church.[1] "Prepare," she wrote at a later date, "to make laws against this plague, and do not excuse yourself by reason of the difficulty of putting them into practice. Do your duty; God will do the rest; and, if you do not succeed, the glory of a fair enterprise will at least be yours. Let difficulties not alarm you. Nothing great can be undertaken without difficulty. God, having given you courage to conceive it, will also give you means of carrying it out. . . . God demands this service of [your friends] and you."[2]

That Alexander should live till her return to Rome was her earnest desire. Where important events were taking place, there she ever longed to be, and, when a better report of the Pope's health reached her, she rejoiced. She had asked of God, she said, that she might be present at the revolution she anticipated, and her prayer had been granted, "which shows one is heard when one does not often importune Him," she added candidly.

The date of her return to Rome was, however, not yet settled. It was not surprising that the Regency

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 199. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

should be opposed to the presence in the kingdom of what they justifiably regarded as a new element of disturbance, to be introduced into a situation more than sufficiently complicated. As Christina noted with pardonable pride, the very love borne her by her former subjects was a reason for those jealous of it to desire her exclusion from Sweden. The little King was a delicate child, whose hold upon life was uncertain; the period of his minority had been so far marked by misfortune, and Sweden, by a vacillating and feeble policy, had forfeited much of its prestige. Men's minds reverted with regret to the brilliant triumphs of Gustavus Adolphus, and to the successes attending his daughter's reign. In spite of her abandonment of her post, in spite, too, of her change of religion, a certain glamour continued to attach to her person, and many throughout the length and breadth of the country were inclined to compare its present condition unfavourably with its former prosperity.

Under these circumstances the attitude of the Regency is not difficult to explain; and its deep-seated distrust of the Queen was expressed, not only by the obstacles interposed in the way of her return, but by orders to Stropp, in charge of her affairs at Stockholm, to produce her letters, and the cross-examination to which he was subjected. Rumours were also circulated that her arrest might follow upon her arrival in Sweden. No alternative, therefore, was left to her but to await developments at Hamburg. Should the Diet assemble, a change might be effected in her favour; and for its meeting, indefinitely postponed, she was forced to wait.

CHAPTER XIX

1666–7

Christina's residence at Hamburg—Letters to Azzolino—Doubts of his affection—Journey to Sweden—Her reception there—Conditions made by the Regency—The Queen's indignation—And her departure.

THE months passed slowly away, the negotiations with the Regency, both as to the conditions upon which the Queen would be admitted to Sweden and the rearrangement of her financial affairs, dragging on, conducted mainly by Adami, the one wholly honest agent she appears to have employed. Into moves and counter-moves, proposals and counter-proposals, it would be tedious to enter in detail. The proceedings on the whole tended, so far as her revenues were concerned, in a direction favourable to Christina's interests, Adami gradually forcing those hostile to her to yield to the justice of her demands, and a settlement being in sight. With regard to the question of her visit, he had also succeeded, or imagined that he had succeeded, in wresting concessions from the Government. The Italians belonging to her household were, contrary to the original prohibition of the Regency, to be permitted to accompany her to Sweden ; and, though foreign priests continued to be formally excluded, Adami was of opinion that their presence would pass unchallenged. The date of her journey was still a moot point. The Diet was expected to assemble in the autumn, and, whilst the main object of Christina's

coming had been a desire to meet it, it was earnestly desired by those in power that her visit should be concluded before it was called together. Under these circumstances the Queen did not hesitate to announce her arrival in Sweden for February, remaining firm in her private determination not to reach her native country before May.

Meanwhile, the Queen was sick in body and mind, lonely and sad in her place of exile. It is not often that her history, seldom wanting in interest, presents her in a pathetic light. But the transformation worked in her character, in relation to the man she loved, calls forth both sympathy and compassion. As the months passed by, the persuasion of Azzolino's affection no longer sustained her, and again and again, in letters filled for the most part with details of business, political news, accounts of her life in Hamburg, or of Adami's successes or failures in Sweden, the anguish with which she divined a change in his sentiments is revealed. She suspected him of a desire to keep her at a distance, complaining on one occasion that she had apparently failed to cure him of the fears he entertained of her return to Rome. The tone of his letters, more than the tidings they contained, convinced her of the changes that had taken place in Italy. She was persuaded that, should she ever return thither, all would be found altered—save her own heart.[1]

In the absence of the letters of which her own are a reflection, it is only possible to hazard a conjecture as to the justice of the Queen's evident conviction that Azzolino had wearied of whatever bond united them. The sequel shows that he remained her friend until the end, ready to serve her in all difficulties, to advise her in all perplexities. But it is not impossible that, ambitious as churchman and statesman, he may have been led, during her absence, to reconsider the situation,

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., pp. 276, 279.

and have arrived at the conclusion that the intimacy was calculated to cost him and his reputation too dear. Whether conscience contributed to render him desirous of effecting a change there are no means of determining; to Christina he may have represented the matter in this light, explaining the bitterness of her scoffs at the saintliness he had lately developed, and in which, it would appear, her belief was small. He would have judged as she did, she once wrote, in reference to some quarrel with her doctor, had he not been *dévot* or saint—or were it not to his interest to be believed to be such.[1]

To the January of 1667 belongs one of the enigmatical passages which, occurring from time to time in her letters, perplex the student of her life. "My intention," she wrote, replying to some communication in cipher of the Cardinal's, "is never, by His grace, to offend God, and never to give you occasion to offend. But this resolution will not prevent me from loving you until death; and, since you are dispensed by devotion from being my lover, I dispense you from being my servant, for I will live and die your slave."[2] In a lighter, but not less bitter tone, she wrote in February, persuaded by his last letter that he had become a veritable saint, whereat she shared his rejoicing, pledging herself to labour during his lifetime at his canonisation, on condition that after her death he would perform the like office for her. In reply to his sermon she could only say that she knew what she owed to God, to him, and to herself, and would try to pay the debt.[3]

She was too clear-sighted to be happy; she lacked wisdom to conceal her knowledge; and her reproaches, passionate and ironical in turn, may have helped to render the Cardinal weary of the connection. Rome,

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 309. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 305.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

he had told her, was impatient for her return. Rome and Azzolino, Christina replied, were never in accord. In the happy days when he had desired her presence, Rome had cared nothing for it. Now Rome's indifference had passed to him ; or rather, it was not indifference he felt as to her presence, but fear and hatred.[1]

Yet it was sufficient for him to express a wish to render her eager to gratify it. At his request she had begun to write her *Mémoires*, but the work made little way. Even religion, in her place of exile, was in her eyes an unsatisfactory condition ; the German Jesuits were old, idle, and as cold as the climate. For her part, she prayed for no other grace than to serve God and please Him until death, regarding all else with indifference and resignation. Everything, save her heart, was ice-bound. That was more ardent than ever.

If one is not happy, it is well to be gay. As the Carnival approached, Christina, rousing herself from her melancholy, determined that, German stolidity notwithstanding, it should be properly observed.[2] A banquet was given, served by the bourgeois of the town ; a free lottery was arranged, offering prizes amounting to the value of 4,000 crowns ; and a masked opera was performed, adapted from the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the rôle of Godfrey de Bouillon being played by Wrangel—the one member of the Swedish Regency loyal to Christina—and the Queen herself, at the head of a bevy of slaves, appearing laden with golden fetters. The ball that followed was opened by Christina, with Wrangel as her partner. The entertainment was a success, and the Queen was proud of it ; but it could not long distract her mind from more serious preoccupations ; her jests had lost their usual careless gaiety, and had become edged with bitterness.

"I do not doubt," she wrote to Azzolino, scoffing at

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., pp. 3, 11.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 150.

the edifying reflections contained in his letters, "that your spirit was, as usual, with God whilst you were witnessing the French ambassador's comedy, and that to direct your gaze on the two ladies who took part in it, and have given so much pleasure in Rome, was a mortification." No doubt he had attended the performance with the object of making converts of them. For her own part—here, discarding irony, she breaks into passion—she had long known that she must die, and therefore begged him to read her no more sermons on that subject. She was not fond of homilies.[1] At other times a profound melancholy replaced anger. "I neither hope," she says, "to change your sentiments nor my own. You are right, and I am not wrong. I do not complain of you. Complain no more of me."[2]

Though hearts may break, it is necessary to live, and the important question of finance, discussed at length, ran side by side with the one, so much more momentous in a woman's eyes, of a man's shifting affection. Christina's journey to Sweden had been finally decided upon for the end of April. Making a virtue of necessity, the Regency had consented to accept a visit from her, and misinformed as to the date, had dispatched its representatives betimes to await her on the frontier, with all that was needed to do honour to the former Queen of Sweden. For two months before her actual arrival Count Pontus de la Gardie, younger brother of her former favourite and present enemy, the Chancellor, had been in readiness to receive her. At last, however, she was able to tell the Cardinal that he would have the satisfaction of hearing that she had started for Sweden—appearing now to resent his desire that her journey should be accomplished—and she hoped there would be shortly added to this satisfaction that of learning that she would never return. Should liberty of worship be conceded, she

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 321. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

would spend the remainder of her life in Sweden. Were it to be refused, she had not decided whither she would turn her steps, save that it would not be towards Rome.

It is not likely that she meant what she said, nor that the assertion was credited by Azzolino. She may have had a hope that the possibility of a lasting separation might rekindle his waning affection. Wounded feelings did not prevent her from keeping him accurately informed of her movements; and, having taken her way through Denmark, she wrote from Sorö on May 13 to describe the attack of fever which, in her own estimation, had brought her to the brink of the grave. The French ambassador, Terlon, her old acquaintance, had fortunately been at hand, and, with the help of his cook and his doctor, had effected a cure.[1]

To Terlon she had expressed herself in a manner showing that, in visiting Sweden, she was in no way prepared to accord unconditional submission to the will of the Regency.

"I hope sufficient affection and consideration will be shown me," she said, "not to *chicaner* me on the subject of Mass. But if, contrary to my hopes, it should be opposed, I am determined to throw up everything and to turn back again at once." [2]

Though recovered from the malady she believed to have threatened her life, a profound depression marks her letters. Her life, she thought, would not be prolonged, and, were her debts paid, she would be content to die, her only regret being that she had lived two years too long.[3]

Her arrival on Swedish soil took place on May 16, when she was received at Helsingborg by the representatives of the King. Every preparation had been

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., pp. 345, 346.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 114.
[3] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 247.

made to do her honour, and she may have augured well from the magnificence of her welcome. The exact value to be attached to these formalities was to be quickly shown. At Jönköping, whither she had been escorted by Pontus de la Gardie and a brilliant retinue numbering some hundred and forty persons, the Count was met by an order from headquarters, directing him to inform the Queen that no Catholic priest must attend her, and requiring that her chaplain should be forthwith dismissed, on pain of legal proceedings being taken against him.[1]

The fact was that, during this month of May, the Regency and the Senate had taken counsel together, and, apparently under the influence of a paroxysm of alarm, had decided upon strong measures, intended to neutralise the danger they apprehended from Christina's presence in the country. Neither she nor her servants were to be permitted the exercise of their religion. Care was to be taken that nothing was set on foot contrary to her Act of Abdication. She was not to be allowed to intermeddle with affairs of State. Special heedfulness was enjoined upon those in charge of the little King's person, his education, and health; and after a formal meeting with his visitor he was to be removed to Upsala. In the event, moreover, of the Queen prolonging her stay beyond a few weeks, she was to be compelled to dismiss all her foreign officers and attendants. Above all, should the Diet assemble during her visit, she was prohibited from being present at any of its meetings, and from holding communication by letter or person with its members.[2]

The extreme harshness and rigour of this "convention" are both significant of the importance attached by the Regency to the Queen's influence and an indication of the uses to which she was expected to put it. Of any intention to subvert the Government, and of those

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 108.

From the original painting.

CHARLES XI., KING OF SWEDEN.

p. 240]

designs upon the little King's person against which it would appear that he was to be safeguarded by "all imaginable care," there can be no doubt that Christina was innocent. Nevertheless, a passage in a letter to Azzolino, belonging to this very time, would seem to show that fears that she might wish to establish a propaganda were not wholly unjustified. "I promise you," she wrote, "that if the new Pope would spend as much a year in the propagation of the faith in these countries as Cardinal Chigi has spent on his horses and dogs, marvels would be seen here in spite of all the obstacles that are interposed."

Meantime, when de la Gardie, with what courtesy he might, communicated to her the orders he had received from Stockholm, it was not strange that Christina was filled with indignation, replying by a direct refusal to dismiss her chaplain, and announcing her intention of leaving the country at once.

"If the King will not have the priest, neither shall he have Christina!" she is said to have exclaimed.

The King, or the Regency in his name, would have reconciled themselves without difficulty to the loss. But Pontus de la Gardie was anxious to avoid a scandal. It was midnight when the Queen, desiring him to dismiss the royal escort, had ordered her post-horses, that she might set forth at once on her journey; and, begging that she would delay her departure, he succeeded in inducing her to defer it until he should have had time to communicate with the Regency and obtain further instructions. A courier was therefore dispatched with letters from the Count, and carrying one, couched in no conciliatory terms, from Christina herself to the King. Any one save herself, she wrote, would have been cruelly offended. But, knowing how to extract glory and advantage from all that happened to her, she would show, by returning the way she came, that for no worldly advantage or

interest would she deprive herself for one moment of the exercise of her religion. Awaiting his final decision before taking her instant departure, and in order to remind him what he was and what she was, she begged him to believe that he was not born to command persons like herself.

If de la Gardie, sincerely anxious to keep the peace, was cognisant of the tone of the letter he was sending to his master, he must have felt that little had been gained by his endeavour to obtain a reconsideration of the question at issue. Pending the arrival of an answer, the Queen continued to have Mass said daily in defiance of the Regency, and, after passing two days in hunting, proceeded to Norrköping, where she was met by the reply to her protest, in the shape of reiterated orders to de la Gardie to enforce the decision of the authorities. It was added that, if the Queen went to hear Mass at the French embassy, it must be under the guise of a simple visit.

"I am to pay a visit to Pomponne!" was Christina's indignant comment. "If he had proposed such a thing, I would have had him beaten, even if it had been in the presence of his own King."

The ultimatum had been accompanied by the usual abundance of empty compliments, but the Queen was in no mood to be softened by them. After the declaration of the Regency, she said that it was no longer fitting that she should accept any civility at their hands, repeated her orders that the escort sent her by the King should be dismissed, and made instant arrangements for her own journey by post-chaise. To de la Gardie she said—to quote the narrator of the scene —"all she thought worthy of herself and her spirit on the subject," which was no doubt much; after which supper was served, and the angry Queen withdrew to make ready for her journey on the morrow.

It is fair to say that her utterances on this occasion

and others, during her short visit to Sweden, carefully noted in a communication addressed to the Regency, either by de la Gardie or his colleague, Baron Sparre,[1] go far to justify, though only after the event, the anxiety displayed by the Government to be quit of their unwelcome guest. The indiscretions of the Queen are indeed amazing, and can only be explained on the hypothesis that most of the conversations reported took place when she had abandoned, owing to the action of the Regency, any desire of conciliation.

Pointing out the impossibility that, under the circumstances, she would prolong her stay in the country, "Am I to become an attendant upon Queen Hedwige?" she asked contemptuously, "and should I submit to the tyranny of a capricious King?"

The Senator she addressed, as in duty bound, protested. It was to be hoped, he observed, that the King would prove just and equitable.

"To others," admitted Christina; "but not to me." What right had he, she asked later, to give her orders, or treat her as a subject. According to natural law, she could be commanded by none. "I see well," she added, "that they seek to embitter me, so that I may commit some folly; but I thank God that I have not allowed myself to be carried away by anger, and have done myself no wrong. Not for ten other kingdoms would I lose the credit and affection I enjoy in this."

Coming to the delicate question of the Swedish succession, she asked hardily whether it was for her to suffer Sweden to be governed by any man save him to whom she had given the crown.

"Never!" she exclaimed, answering her own question. "Rather would I lose ten lives, if I had them. I wish the King a long life. But, should he suffer the penalty common to all men, I should have a word to say, if not for myself, as to him who should fill his place;"

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., pp. 278-84.

proceeding to make the rash boast that clergy, peasants, and nobles would give her their support, and that religion would not create opponents for her.

Her interlocutor again objected. Acknowledging the veneration once felt for her person, he told her plainly that the love she had won had been totally effaced by her change of faith, and that many honest men would die rather than see a foreign religion introduced into the country.

Christina affected to make little of the argument.

"Would to God," she said, "you could assure me that they have nothing else against me. I should be very happy, and all would go well." Should she desire the throne—of which, however, she had no thought—it would not be for her to constrain any one in the matter of their creed; but to say, with Turenne, "I am a Calvinist, but my sword is Catholic." And she earnestly disavowed any intention, past or present, of coercion.

All this, and much more, was duly reported to the Regency, no doubt causing them to congratulate themselves upon having taken measures resulting in her departure. It was also said that the Queen had done her best to please—*caressoit fort*—the officers belonging to her escort, and had listened sympathetically to the complaints of the peasants on her route, who had openly lamented the change in the condition of the country since her abdication, the increase of taxation, and other grievances, and thereby had caused no little disquiet to the representatives of the King. It had been amply demonstrated that her memory was still green in the country of her birth, and that in a time of popular discontent her presence there might be a serious danger.

For the present, she was in haste to quit it, and her sole concession to Court etiquette was the permission she accorded to Pontus de la Gardie to act as her escort

to the frontier. Tenacious of its glorious memories, Sweden had welcomed the daughter of its great King with affectionate rejoicing, and tears and lamentation marked her departure. But she could not be stayed, and "passed like a flash of lightning," reaching Helsingör on June 4. That very night she would have wished to cross the Sound; but, persuaded to delay until the morrow, she caused, as a last defiance to the orders of the Regency, Mass to be said that morning; then, shaking the dust of her native country off her feet, she took a final leave of it.[1]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 116.

CHAPTER XX

1667–9

Christina's return to Hamburg—Election of Clement IX.—Her celebration of it, and the consequent riot—Negotiations with the Regency —Letters to Azzolino—The throne of Poland.

AT Stockholm, rejoicing at the departure of the dangerous guest was more than counterbalanced, in the opinion of the French ambassador, by regret at the discredit likely to attach in the eyes of the world to the men who had practically driven her out of the kingdom. To Christina it was a consolation to reflect that the means taken were intended to prevent a visit dreaded more than death itself, and afforded proof of the fear she inspired. To inspire fear was only less desirable than to inspire love.

In the meantime, she had regained Hamburg, travelling with such speed as to exhaust the members of her train ; she, herself, sustained by excitement, showing no signs of fatigue.[1] It was, indeed, a serious matter to be her travelling companion. "You accuse me," she wrote afterwards to Azzolino, "of journeying like a spirit, and that this fashion of doing it kills all who have bodies. But I must ask you whether you would rather have me die or cause others to do so ; for it is certain that, if it destroys them to travel in my way, I should die of it if I travelled in theirs."[2]

Whatever might be Azzolino's views, it was certain

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 357. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 439

that Christina would not moderate her pace out of consideration for her household.

She was met on her arrival at Hamburg by tidings of the death of Alexander VII., to be followed before long by the election of Cardinal Rospigliosi as Clement IX. In the interval she was anxiously urging upon Azzolino the necessity of measures which would provide against the scandals connected with the nepotism so flagrant in the past. She was spurring a willing horse. "I wish you may succeed in the matter of the nephews," she wrote on June 15. "The design is glorious, nor ought the difficulties to alarm you. You must try to vanquish them, and I await your success with impatience. . . . God give you grace to succeed." [1] And again, a week later, "I am waiting impatiently for you to begin to drive away future nephews; for I ask quarter for past ones. In my opinion, they should be allowed to enjoy what they have in peace, provided a remedy is supplied for the future. Forgive my zeal if I say too much on this subject." [2]

The election of the new Pope was a triumph not only for Azzolino and his friends, but for France. Louis, Azzolino, and Christina were for the time in the same camp; and, though the Swedish Government had done its best to sow distrust between the Queen and France, she had taken prompt steps to neutralise their endeavours, writing to tell Pomponne that nothing was more false than the information he had received,[3] and communicating with Lionne himself in the same sense. In the answer of the Minister, the election of Clement is attributed to Azzolino, de Retz, and the Duc de Chaulnes, French ambassador at Rome.

Azzolino was to be Secretary of State, and all was going well. In acknowledging the letter of the

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 367. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 370.
[3] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 288.

Abbé Rospigliosi, announcing to her the good news, Christina expressed her gratification, not omitting to make use of the opportunity to press Azzolino's claims upon the family of the new Pope: "Since you are aware in part of what you owe to the services of the Lord Cardinal Azzolino, I venture to ask on his behalf all the gratitude he has deserved by the signal services he has rendered you. . . . I am charmed that you are aware of it, and am sure that you will do justice to his merits. For my own part I protest that I shall be obliged and indebted to you for all you may do for him or for his friends."[1]

It was well to rejoice; it would have been Christina's wisdom to rejoice privately. She was, however, never wise; and, encouraged by the Marquis del Monti—now head of her household and always in favour of expenses out of which he made his private profit—she challenged the disapproval of the Protestant town whose hospitality she enjoyed, by her manner of celebrating the Pope's election. A display of fireworks was to mark the event. The front of her residence was to be illuminated; and decorations had been devised to illustrate Catholic dogmas, including an allegorical figure of the Church trampling heresy under her feet.[2] No better means could have been taken to invite a riot, and a riot ensued.

The account of the events of the day and night, prepared under Christina's eyes by her priest and secretary Santini, places the scene vividly before the reader.[3] The Queen is depicted entering into the business in hand with all the enjoyment of a child engaged in a forbidden feat, her pleasure enhanced by the excitement of possible danger and the knowledge that she was offending the susceptibilities of an environment she disliked and despised, and was throwing

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 289. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 127.
[3] *Ibid.*, t. iii., pp. 290–5.

down the glove to the public of Hamburg. The public of Hamburg accepted the challenge. Rumours of the Queen's intentions had got abroad, and during the week preceding the spectacle the local preachers had prepared the way by their oratory for a spirited protest.

The magistrates of the town had likewise, at the instance of the preachers, informed the Queen of their sentiments; but — to quote the narrative — "her Majesty made them aware of her own in a manner so brusque and haughty that it deprived them of any desire to compromise themselves, and they determined to say no more. . . . There is every appearance," added the secretary, "that, irritated by this *hauteur* and instigated by the preachers, they did not do all they might and should have done to prevent disorder."

It was perhaps too much to expect that the magistrates, having duly warned Christina, should exert themselves to avert the consequences of the action they deprecated. The day, nevertheless, began well. Pontifical Mass was celebrated in the great hall of Christina's house, and was attended by a brilliant company, including the Prince of Hesse-Homburg—who had remonstrated in vain with the Queen—the Count de Leiningen, and others; a salute of cannon at different parts of the service announcing to the inhabitants of Hamburg, had they not already been aware of it, what was going forward. Mass over, some of the guests departed, everything remaining quiet, although the house was surrounded by a crowd drawn together partly by curiosity, partly by the fact that it was known that wine was presently to flow from a fountain for all who chose to drink.

The decorations on the façade were, meantime, being completed, the gilt letters of the new Pope's name, with the Tiara and the Keys, being only imperfectly veiled by their coverings. Apprehensive that

the sight might give rise to disorder, the Queen, leaving her dinner scarcely begun, had gone to place herself at a window from which, commanding a view of the crowd, she could watch developments and, as she trusted, restrain by her presence any hostile manifestations.

So far tranquillity was maintained. The spectators, still sober, watched the proceedings with quiet curiosity, repeating to each other the words they deciphered, the Queen listening with extreme pleasure —it is difficult to understand why—to the "Vivat Clemens IX.!" pronounced by the lips of an heretical *canaille*. Wine, from nine fountain-heads, began to flow, and for six hours all who would drank of it, the dangerous element of intoxication being thereby added to the anger of an indignant throng. The outbreak was curiously deferred, whilst liquor and anger worked together upon the stolid German crowd.

"Let the wine and the lights end," some of them were heard to say; "then will our game begin, and we will avenge ourselves for the insult offered us."

The July night had come. A salute of cannon, nine times repeated in honour of the Pope, heralded the illuminations, and Clement's name sprang to light, traced by six hundred lamps, rows of wax-tapers below defining the lines of the building. And still the storm delayed. Three hours the device burned unchallenged, and Christina, tired out with the long day, was on the point of retiring to rest when suddenly the signal was given for the assault, and a shower of stones was discharged at her windows.

The Queen was no coward; but the situation was not without peril, and her measures were taken promptly. The illuminations were extinguished, lest the Pope's name should be exposed to insult; the cannon used for the salutes were charged with musket-balls; the household, reinforced by the Prince of Hesse-Homburg,

Leiningen, and others, were armed, and a determined front was opposed to the crowd of assailants.

Christina, according to her secretary, with some remains of wisdom, refused to allow the crowd to be fired upon save as a last resource; and it was not until the Commandant of the town, asked by the Count de Leiningen to send assistance, had refused to meddle in the affair, and that the case of the defenders was becoming desperate, that she gave the order. Some of the crowd were killed, others wounded. A second attempt of Leiningen's having caused the military authorities to abandon their attitude of inaction, the Commandant and his soldiers arrived upon the scene, and the affair was practically concluded, the Queen being obliged by the condition of her house to retire to that of the Swedish Resident, who had probably looked on grimly enough at the performances of his inconvenient charge.

Thus ended, with riot and bloodshed, one of the incidents well calculated to make governments hesitate before offering hospitality to the vagrant Queen.

Rejoicing at the accession of the new Pope, and the excitement attending upon her celebration of the event may have helped to pass the time. But, had Christina foreseen how long her residence at Hamburg was still to last, her heart would have sunk. It was not until the end of November, 1668, that she was destined to re-enter Rome. She had confidently counted upon reaching it a year earlier; and with bitter regret had found herself compelled to linger on in the northern city until her financial affairs in Sweden had been placed upon what she considered a satisfactory footing. The details of her negotiations with the Swedish Government, her wrangles with the officials charged with the care of her interests, and not seldom subordinating them to their own, the different attempts she made to establish her income

upon a securer basis, would be uninteresting to follow at length. But it should be borne in mind that the Queen's life at Hamburg was never free from this sordid and wearisome accompaniment, and that, side by side with other pre-occupations, ran the thread of the unintermittent struggle between the ex-Queen of Sweden and the Regency.

The conduct of the negotiations had been entrusted to a fresh agent, Rosenbach, charged with the duty of attempting to effect the exchange of the Queen's revenues for the principality of Bremen. Her hopes of a satisfactory settlement were founded upon an indomitable confidence in the devotion of the Swedish nation to her person. "One may say," she told Rosenbach, "that they [the Queen's friends] number as many as there are men in Sweden," with certain exceptions. Those exceptions, with Magnus de la Gardie at their head, unfortunately included most of the governing body, and were of sufficient force to outweigh the rest of the nation. Pending the assembling of the Diet, from which, as representing the people, she hoped so much, she again engaged in the attempt to re-open her way to Sweden, and, for the sake of being present at Stockholm during its deliberations, would have been prepared to waive the question of freedom of religious worship. The Regency, however, was determined that matters should not be complicated by her presence, and the Regency possessed the power of exclusion. Under these circumstances, her project was gradually abandoned, and she awaited the results of Rosenbach's diplomacy at a distance.

The Queen's letters during the summer and autumn of 1668 testify to the detailed and personal care she bestowed on business affairs.[1] To some persons her agent was to promise her coming as a bribe; to others he was to use it as a threat. To her Governor-

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., pp. 304–33.

General Bååt, recently appointed Grand Treasurer, she pledged her word that, should her demands be granted, she would not visit Sweden an uninvited guest. In case of refusal, she expressed her determination to solicit in person what was denied to her envoy.[1]

Although no great practical amelioration was effected, the Diet, when it met, proved more propitious to the Queen than the Senate or the heads of the Government. It was possibly with a view to counteracting an over-favourable view of her claims that reports were circulated to the effect that Christina was plotting to dispossess the King and to regain her former position. Her indignation was great at rumours specially calculated to damage her cause, and likewise reflecting upon her honour and integrity. The King, she retorted, was the work of her own hands—his crown scarcely less so ; nor should ingratitude prevent her from doing her utmost to preserve what she had made.[2] To her former official, Appelmann, to whom the reports were traced, she addressed a letter couched in characteristic terms. She had not thought to abase herself by writing to him. But, since it concerned her reputation that he should speak, she ordered him to produce her letters and instructions, that they might make him known to be the most perfidious person that ever lived. "I do not ask of God the punishment of your crime ; for He is too just to prevent me from giving you such a one as your treachery deserves."[3]

Hopes and fears and disappointments succeeded one another. As usual, Christina was confident of success in the plans she conceived ; but, one after another, they were abandoned. Bremen—the possession of which she had coveted—would have been conceded to her only on terms in no way including the sovereign rights she desired to obtain, and the scheme, like

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 307. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 312. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

others devised by her restless brain, came to nought. At one moment she would seem on the point of risking the journey to Sweden, in spite of any danger attending it, and ready to visit it without priests, thus depriving her enemies of their pretext of exclusion. But she was not likely to carry out the plan. Death, she said, had no terrors for her ; but to die unconfessed and unassoiled was a fate from which she shrank with positive terror. In the meantime, concessions were offered by the authorities, to be accepted with joy and triumph by the Queen, and then to be found weighted with conditions, or remaining a dead letter. When at length her steps were turned southward she had not gained more by her sojourn at Hamburg than a recognition of the debt, of 60,000 crowns, owed her by the Government, accompanied by a promise of payment.

So the months wore themselves away. Rome was the Paradise towards which Christina's eyes were constantly directed ; and for her present surroundings, for Germans and Germany, her dislike and contempt were becoming more and more accentuated. A lonely woman, with none at hand bound to her by ties of blood or old friendship ; a few servants or dependants of doubtful integrity her sole companions ; considering herself, not without reason, unfairly treated by the authorities of her native land, and aware that too frequently in her life's story betrayal had followed upon trust, it was not to be wondered at if her spirit became embittered and she was at times prone to confound the innocent with the guilty, and to suspect—as in the case of Adami—treason or disloyalty where they were absent. Occasionally, though rarely, her attitude of submission towards Azzolino is exchanged for upbraiding.

"You are wrong to scold me on the subject of my journey to Sweden," she says in one of these outbursts ; "but, as I esteem and honour you infinitely, I

bear it without complaint. . . . I do not love life sufficiently not to expose it to danger on this occasion, if I were sure that no other risk would be run but that of losing it. I have lost all that could make me care for life ; after that loss, I am in no condition, nor have I any wish, to spare it, and I could only regard the day of my death as the happiest of my life, since it would be the last. After this I will tell you that you speak of my private affairs in a way which seems to me a little extraordinary ; but from you I bear everything ; and for your consolation I will only say that my return to Rome is not so near at hand as you fear. Your felicity will not be troubled by my presence long, and if, as I hope, I can overcome the fatality binding me to Rome, I shall seek a corner of the world where poverty is not a disgrace as at Rome, and where I shall at least have the comfort that I shall not be eternally reproached with it by you. . . . Your comedy is fine ; it is the antidote of your letters. But alas ! my ills are real and their remedies are verses ! All this will not prevent my remaining to you the same until death." [1] The following month is marked by the same bitterness of spirit. "You treat me after a fashion that will kill me," she cries passionately. "God forgive you ; I do not deserve it." [2] Yet, a fortnight later, her pardon is already accorded. "Your repentance is as grateful to me as your injustice was cruel. But, after all, you are all-powerful with me, and, however it may please you to use me, I shall never complain." [3]

In the absence of Azzolino's letters, it is only possible to infer the reason of quarrels which interrupted, maybe not for long, a close and continuous commerce of affection. The Cardinal was to show that he had Christina's interests deeply at heart and did not spare

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 434. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 457.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 460.

pains or trouble to forward them. But her extravagance, her disregard of the necessary conditions of existence, if life were not to be continually harassed with money difficulties ; perhaps, too, the incurable optimism of her outlook, may well have been irritating to a practical man.

Meantime, distraction from sentimental and other troubles was occasionally to be found even at Hamburg. There were visits from Constable Wrangel, who would always have been a welcome guest; whilst a less creditable acquaintance was Borri, the charlatan doctor and alchemist, who, forced to leave Italy by the condemnation passed upon him by the Inquisition, had drifted north, and, trading on Christina's imperfect knowledge of his past, had obtained an entrance into her house. The foothold acquired there by an adventurer of more than doubtful character was strongly disapproved by Azzolino ; and, eager to defer to his wishes, Christina, on first hearing from the Cardinal, had at once forbidden Borri her presence, only so far revoking her order, by the advice of the Hamburg priests, "as to bear with him, as one bears with so many others here," continuing to exclude him from her chapel and from Mass. This amount of toleration remained subject to Azzolino's approval.[1] It was indeed her wish to submit her judgment to the Cardinal's in all things. "Forgive me," she writes in October, 1667, in a tone not without pathos in a woman of her nature and disposition, "if my letter of August 27 and all the preceding ones have offended you. Whatever was in it, I beseech you to believe that I can only indulge sentiments on the subject of your goodness and your merit far surpassing esteem and veneration ; and I hope that all the actions of my life may supply so advantageous an explanation of my letter that you will have no reason to complain

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 393.

of me, and will be persuaded that I do only too much justice to your virtue—perhaps more than you would wish." [1]

Christina's regret at her enforced delay was enhanced by the climate. Often sick in body as well as in mind, she complained of sudden changes of weather, from Italian heat to Swedish cold, of the absence of sunshine, and of a damp threatening her with being metamorphosed into a frog. Yet she never appears to have contemplated a return to Rome prior to the accomplishment of her aims.

During the latter portion of her sojourn at Hamburg those aims had been thrown into the background, and her mind was intent upon a fresh project. This was her election to the vacant throne of Poland.

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 394.

CHAPTER XXI

1668

The Polish scheme—Means taken to further it—Letters and instructions—Continued negotiations with the Swedish Regency—Interview with Kleihe—The Queen leaves Hamburg.

IT is a common habit to generalise from personal experience; and Christina's reflections upon life and character are, like others, often of the nature of confessions. One observation in particular, included amongst her maxims, applies with special force to her own shifting aims and ambitions. "We almost always remain children," she wrote, "changing at each age our amusements and our dolls. All is gradually proportioned to our capacity, but in the end we are still busy with *bagatelles*. Each season, each age, mocks at those left behind it, though the occupation which has followed is little more serious than the last." In Christina's case aims and objects succeeded one another with startling rapidity; and every fresh project was embraced with as much ardour as if it were to last a lifetime.

If her designs upon the Polish crown belong, as far as their success or the probabilities of their success are concerned, to the region of romance, they lack the interest sometimes attaching to romantic enterprises. The facts were briefly these. John Casimir, King of Poland, had, like Christina herself fourteen years earlier, decided that a crown was too heavy a burden, and had resolved upon abdication. His successor was

to be chosen by election; and Christina determined to press her claims, as the last representative of the house of Vasa, to the reversion of the throne.

Four candidates were in the field—namely, the Duke of Neuburg, favoured by France; the Prince de Condé, whom Louis would support in case of Neuburg's rejection; a son of the Czar; and Prince Charles de Lorraine. At what precise date Christina decided upon entering the lists against these competitors is uncertain. Her motives must likewise be matter of conjecture. She had shown that she could resign a crown, and success, had she achieved it, would have meant lifelong banishment from all she held dearest. That she was at times haunted by the dread of this result will be seen; yet she threw herself eagerly into the struggle. The lust of power, the longing to assert it, ran in her blood; and the possibility of regaining what she had voluntarily relinquished stirred her to strain every nerve and sinew in the contest. It was probably more the fight than the prize to be won that attracted her. In the dull stagnation of life at Hamburg, varied by little else than the phases of a sordid financial quarrel, the excitement offered by a race for a throne was irresistibly alluring to a nature as restless and combative as that of the vagabond Queen; and the very difficulties besetting the enterprise may have lent it charm. That she was a woman was against her; that she was unlikely to leave an heir was against her; Monaldesco, in his grave, was against her. Nevertheless, with his Holiness and Azzolino to back her claims, what was to prevent her from triumphing, from becoming once more a Queen, not only in name, but in fact, and proving that, excluded from the land she had once ruled, another nation was willing to bow to her sway?

Though success, to sane brains, must have seemed from the first almost impossible, Azzolino, hard-headed

politician as he was, was bent upon attempting to compass it. Save by the Cardinal and herself, Christina's candidature was scarcely taken seriously. The Pope, it was true, would gladly have furthered her cause, had the choice of a sovereign for Poland lain in his hands, and a brief was sent to the Nuncio at Warsaw commending her to the electors, though with the proviso that it should only be made public if expected to take effect. The Nuncio, for his part, was in no-wise unwilling to render a service to Azzolino, and thereby to secure the Cardinal's hat which would be placed at the disposal of the new sovereign. Few persons, however, appear to have regarded Christina's election as within the range of practical politics.

Undeterred by causes of discouragement, the Queen took the initial step in the contest by addressing a letter to the Nuncio, in July 1668, to be presented by an ecclesiastic named Hacki, dispatched to Warsaw as her agent and intermediary. A second document contained the priest's instructions, and prescribed the arguments to be employed when announcing to the representative of the Pope the Queen's intention of entering the lists. In this paper she stated that "surpassing [all other aspirants] as to birth, and perhaps as to merit, she believed it her duty to tempt fortune, that she might see what it would please God to ordain," placing her interests, her hopes and her fortunes in the hands of Pope Clement.[1] Proceeding to recapitulate the arguments in her favour, she pointed out that she was the sole surviving member of the royal house of Sweden and Poland; that her only reason for resigning her crown had been that Sweden was neither a Catholic country, nor on the way to become one; that an injustice would be done her were a foreigner to be elected to the vacant post; that being unmarried, disinclined to matrimony and without issue, Poland had

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 341.

From a painting by David Beck.

QUEEN CHRISTINA.

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the less cause to fear for its liberties, and would after her death be free to make a fresh choice.

Other papers of instructions—Christina spared neither time nor trouble in their preparation—were more explicit. The rival competitors were passed in review, and their several disadvantages detailed. The most formidable amongst them was, in her estimation, Condé, and it is curious to read her allusions, at this later date, to the man who had been selected as her champion in youth. The strength of his position was admitted. He had birth, merit, and money. The greater his advantages, the more care must be taken to combat them. "You must try to render him suspect, to make him known as a Prince addicted to violence, whose heated blood will desire to avenge upon Poland all the annoyance inflicted upon him for years past by the French Court. This Prince . . . is little fitted to govern a free nation. . . . It is true he is a great captain and a great soldier, but very violent and extremely avaricious; it is even doubtful whether he would be as great as a King as he is great as a Captain; and these qualities should not be confounded." [1]

Thus—alas for the vanished illusions of youth—Christina wrote of her past hero and present rival. A voluminous note addressed to the Nuncio on the subject of the double obstacle presented to her election by the fact that she was a woman and unmarried, contains characteristic passages. Azzolino, in pressing her claims, had contended that the difficulty of sex might be overcome, since she was regarded by the world not only as a man, but as superior to all men; [2] and Christina herself proceeded to deal with the question on the same lines. After citing instances in which Poland had submitted to feminine government, she adduced in her favour the record of her reign—one more absolute than

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 341. [2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 449.

any of those of her predecessors—and of her successes, which caused her to be still adored, feared, and regretted in her native land. In what way, she demanded, was she incapacitated by womanhood ? Should Poland require the services of a leader at the head of an army, she would joyfully act in that capacity, " and I protest that the hope of having that satisfaction causes me, in itself, to desire the crown of Poland ; and that, should they wish to bestow it upon me on condition I should not do so, never would I accept it. All my life I have passionately desired this opportunity, not permitted to me by the state of my affairs. In fact, if they take the trouble to examine the course of my life, my nature and temperament, it seems to me that they might do me the favour of allowing my sex to count for nothing."

Coming to the question of marriage, she confessed candidly that not to gain the empire of the world would she assume that yoke. Free, she could not consent to give herself a master, or to incur an intolerable servitude. After which, changing her tone abruptly, she observed easily that, should her arguments in favour of a childless Queen fail to convince, the Nuncio might hold out hopes that, in case of her election, the persuasions of his Holiness and the Polish nation might overcome her distaste for matrimony.[1]

Again Azzolino supported her statements. With the exception of Condé, he declared, no prince was more capable of military command, and only opportunity was lacking to make her courage and martial spirit known to the world. On the question of marriage, the Poles must be convinced that she was open to argument.[2]

Christina's imagination was busy with the future, Poland was at present exhausted and helpless ; but, given two years for repose and recuperation, and she would be ready to take the field at the head of its

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., pp. 360–3.
[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 453.

forces against the Turks, hoping to win the renown of which she had dreamt. And yet, grateful as she was for Azzolino's zeal, a touch of wistfulness in her questioning as to whence it sprang betrays the woman to whom her friend's affection was, after all, of more importance than gratified ambition.

"I know not what to wish in this affair," she wrote in August, an unusual note of uncertainty making itself apparent, "and I protest to you that I have repented a thousand times that I ever thought of it, assuring you that I should be inconsolable should it succeed; for when I consider that it would be necessary to leave Rome for ever, to pass the rest of my life amongst a barbarous people of whose language and customs I am ignorant, the idea renders me inconsolable; and I can only be comforted by the hope of ill success. I am almost inclined to complain of your zeal. Is it that you want to be rid of me? If so, do not imagine that you will be as easily relieved. Should it come to pass, you will have to resolve, like me, to turn *polacco*, and if you are not determined to do this your labour is lost. Except on that condition I would never accept it, even though, with the crown of Poland, I were offered that of the universe."[1]

Her misgivings notwithstanding, Christina continued to carry on her campaign. It was, however, after a fashion of her own. To compete with her rivals in the matter of bribery, or to attempt to buy the crown would be, she told the Nuncio plainly, to inflict a wound upon her reputation: "I know the Poles," she wrote with contempt. "I know that they take money from every one, and laugh at it, acting afterwards as it suits them to act." For her part, she would owe whatever she might gain to God and the Pope alone.[2]

The negotiations were being thus carried on, with

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 471.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 374.

alternating hopes and fears, when Christina decided that her financial affairs had been placed upon a footing sufficiently secure to warrant her in taking leave of Hamburg, and setting forth on her journey south.

All her arrangements were made, and upon October 20 she was to start for Rome, shaking the dust of the hospitable German city from her feet ; when, on the eve of her departure, a certain Dietrich Kleihe, President of the Government of Bremen, appeared in the capacity of envoy from the Regency. Of what took place in the ensuing interview—or of what she desired should be believed to have taken place—Christina wrote an account, some months later.[1]

"The day preceding my departure from Hamburg, Kleihe arrived there. He was brought into my presence after it had been made known to me that he had orders and was commissioned to speak to me on behalf of the King, his master. He harangued me long, employing many useless words to persuade me not to go to Sweden, saying that the King, his master, had strong reasons compelling him to forbid me the Kingdom during his minority, that he had sent him to announce his determination on the subject ; for seeing the universal love, esteem, and affection entertained for me in Sweden, he felt obliged, as a politician, to fear a Queen who, possessing the hearts of his subjects, was a danger to him." Christina was, however, to be permitted to select a place of residence in the German provinces, and would there enjoy all honour and respect.

To this intimation the Queen made a reply she represented as couched in language of moderation and calm. On the point of starting for Rome, she had had no thought of a return to Sweden. She did not consider that she had deserved banishment, and was assured that the outrage did not proceed from the nation. After which she went on to thank the King

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 401.

for the testimony he had borne to the esteem she inspired in the country, expressing a hope that her absence would remove the panic caused by her presence there. With a few more sentences of the same sort the interview was brought to a close, a reply being written by the Queen to the young King in the like sense.

The letter did not find favour at headquarters; and Christina afterwards complained that it had been made a pretext, together with Kleihe's false report of his audience, for an action calling down the anger of Heaven and universal blame[1]—the threat to deprive her of any share in the administration of the provinces from which her revenues were drawn, and to cause payment to be made through the Swedish Government. It is fair to state that other accounts of the Queen's reception of the King's envoy do not tally with her own; nor are the dignity and calm she describes characteristic of her usual behaviour when subjected to treatment she may justifiably have regarded as insulting.

It is curious that in her letter to Azzolino, of the day following upon Kleihe's visit, there is no mention of the incident. Triumphant and successful as she chose to represent herself, she was full of joy at the approaching meeting.

"At length I am departing hence, with the joy felt by souls leaving purgatory—and I hope I have done part of mine here. But I depart proud of having arranged all in a manner to afford you satisfaction. All is accomplished in Sweden; the Estates have given me all I wished; and in every way I am truly too much obliged to them. I hope this letter will precede me only by a few days, therefore I say no more, waiting to give you an exact account of it myself. I beg you to be assured that I await with extreme impatience the happy moment when I shall see you again. Adieu!"[2]

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 495, note. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

CHAPTER XXII

1668–9

Christina's return to Rome—Its present condition—Pope Clement IX. —The palace and the city—Continued negotiations with Poland—Christina's failure—Death of the Pope.

THUS ended the Queen's last absence from Italy. Much had been attempted since she had left it. Many of the hopes she had indulged had been doomed to disappointment. Put as good a face upon it as she might, little had been done, in the matter of her relations with Sweden, to render her future, so far as it depended upon the authorities there, more assured than before; and amongst those in high place at Stockholm she could count but few friends. The sentence of exclusion from her native land had been definitely pronounced, and she had failed to wring from the Government any substantial concessions as to Catholic worship.

She was, however, returning to Rome engrossed by fresh projects. Chimerical as her hopes of obtaining the Polish crown may have appeared to impartial judges, her sanguine spirit minimised the obstacles in the way of success; whilst the immediate future, including her release from a place of abode abhorrent to her, and its exchange for one she loved, lay bright before her. On October 20 she set out on her journey, accompanied in its first stages by the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg and Marshal Wrangel.

Her route lay through Brunswick, Nuremburg,

Augsburg, and Innsbruck, and, though travelling with her customary rapidity, she found time to dispatch a letter from Trent to the Polish Nuncio, informing him that she was on her way to render thanks in person to the Pope for his efforts on her behalf. "I shall await with indifference the issue it may please God to give to these negotiations," the Queen added.

By November 20 Narni had been reached, and there her meeting with Azzolino took place. On the following day she was entertained by the Pope's orders at Castelnuovo, and the morning after received the congratulations of twenty-four Cardinals, of the Spanish ambassador, and of Clement's nephews. Her entry to the city was made in a carriage of the Pope's, his kinsman Cardinal Rospigliosi and Cardinal Barbarini, *doyen* of the Sacred College, accompanying her, and the Papal and Swiss Guards acting as her escort. She was greeted with salvos of artillery, was at once received in audience by the Pope, and, her interview with him over, was conducted in state to her palace. Christina had returned to the home of her predilection.

The condition of Rome at the time enhanced the joy she would in any case have felt at a return to it. The short reign of Clement IX.—lasting over no more than two years and a half—has been called its golden age. A good man, generous and benevolent, bent upon filling his great office worthily, and cherishing lofty aims and objects, all were agreed in paying him homage. An anonymous French agent, giving an account of the Roman Court, and in nowise inclined to take too indulgent a view of the dangers arising from the mismanagement and extravagance of those connected with it, is as unmeasured in his praise of the Pope as others.[1] Never had he known a man possessing qualities more eminent, or a

[1] *Relation de l'État de la Cour de Rome sous le Pontificat de Clément IX.*

more excellent disposition. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, his tendency, with regard to his kinsfolk, was rather to withhold the rewards they had deserved than to bestow them unworthily ;[1] the Cardinal-nephew, Rospigliosi, who occupied, as custom demanded, the most prominent position at the Papal Court, taking example by his uncle, and being no less generous and modest.

A lover of art, and with literary tastes, Clement had been a writer, an opera of his composition having been dedicated to Christina and performed in honour of her first visit to Rome. The relations between himself and the Queen had been those of personal friendship, and he had been a member of the "accademia," holding its meetings under her auspices. More than all, Azzolino stood high in his favour. According to Lionne, his election was in part due to the Cardinal's exertions, and he was not unmindful of his obligations. "M. le Cardinal de Retz, M. le Cardinal Azzolino, and M. de Chaulnes placed the tiara on the head of the Pope," wrote the French Minister to Christina in the summer of 1667 ; "and his Holiness is not ignorant of this. . . . I see with great joy that he has already bestowed upon M. le Cardinal Azzolino the greatest mark of confidence and esteem he has to give," [2] in making him Secretary of State.

There was no doubt that Azzolino was a competent one. His "angelic activity," to quote the same contemporary writer, was capable of disentangling in the twinkling of an eye the most complicated business ; and he was at the head of a body in the Sacred College who, in spite of being few in number, were worth, by reason of their personal qualities and the harmony maintained amongst themselves, all the rest of the

[1] *Relation de l'État de la Cour de Rome sous le Pontificat de Clément IX.*, p. 11.

[2] Bildt, *Christine de Suède*, etc., p. 372.

Cardinals put together. Aiming at the glory of God, and the good of the Church, they never made merchandise of their liberty.[1]

Such was the view of an observer who had studied the Roman Court at close quarters. As to Christina, the fact that Azzolino had attained to a position where his energies and abilities would find full scope was an additional reason for rejoicing that Clement occupied the Papal throne. Whether she had found, upon her return to Rome, that her fears of a change in the Cardinal's sentiments were unfounded, or whether she had consented to moderate her expectations, to reconstruct the relationship upon a fresh basis, and to adapt her demands to what he could give, there is no means of determining. But it is clear that Christina was happy.

Public causes no doubt contributed to make her so. The special desire of Clement during his short pontificate was to unite the Catholic powers in resistance to the infidel, and to form a league in opposition to Ottoman encroachments; and Christina, who had formerly cherished with passion a similar design, had found a Pope after her own heart. His attempts to carry his schemes into effect, his failure, and the bitterness of disappointment to which his death has been sometimes ascribed, do not belong to the Queen's history. But the fact that these aspirations formed a background of high and noble purpose to the splendour and trivialities of the brilliant Pontifical Court should be borne in mind in reviewing this period of her life. Her old dreams of earlier days were revived, and projects relinquished years before seemed on the point of realisation.

It may be that her long absence had caused her shortcomings to be forgotten. Clement was, at all events, cordial in his welcome. In spite of regulations

[1] *Relation de l'État de la Cour de Rome*, etc.

to the contrary, she dined with him at the Quirinal, and—a more substantial proof of his good-will—the pension of 12,000 crowns she had formerly enjoyed was renewed. After her dreary exile at Hamburg, better days were opening before her. She was for once at peace with her surroundings.

A letter to the Marshal de Wurtz, designed to remove false impressions of the Roman Court prevailing in Holland, shows her proud of its present condition. The Pope was a prince worthy of universal worship; his kin, of either sex, abounded in virtue, generosity, and merit. Cardinal Ottoboni was a great and able statesman; Azzolino had the intellect and capacity of a demon, the virtue of an angel, a heart as noble and great as that of an Alexander. The other members of the "Flying Squadron" were men of merit and ability, of honour and heart, incorruptible, faithful to their friends and master. Even of Chigi, nephew to the late Pope and soon to be in violent opposition to Azzolino, and of his faction, she had nothing but good to say. "Such," she concludes, "is the Roman Court, and the men who are most exposed to the attacks of envy. I hold as false all that is not in harmony with this description. Judge whether similar persons deserve to be, as they are, subjects of calumny."[1]

Turning from palace to city—from matters, if not spiritual, connected with things spiritual, to purely worldly ones, the social condition of Rome was no less adapted to command the approval of the Queen's pleasure-loving nature, starved during the grey years of her childhood and youth, and eager to sun itself in the atmosphere of light and warmth surrounding her. Never had the Roman Court been more brilliant; never were the Romans more bent upon enjoyment of every kind. Pageant succeeded pageant, entertainment entertainment. Devout practices and

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 407.

business might claim the morning hours; afternoon and evening were given to the theatre, to music, and to every other species of pastime. The Roman ladies were introducing French fashions. Some of them, following in Christina's footsteps, dressed as Amazons; all went gaily forward.

In everything the Queen will have borne a part. Yet she was not absorbed by pleasure, nor would her strenuous and active mind have been satisfied without wider interests. Her indefatigable energy, her power of work, demanded an outlet, and that outlet the negotiations with Poland, carried on as energetically as before, continued to supply. Notwithstanding the attractions offered by Rome during these halcyon days; notwithstanding the misgivings she must surely have felt as to whether Azzolino, in case of her success, was the man, now that he was at the top of the wave, to relinquish his position at the Vatican, and to consent to bury himself, his talents, and his ambition, in a provincial capital, her endeavours to secure the Polish crown were never relaxed. No note of weariness and discouragement is apparent in her voluminous correspondence on the subject, her instructions, arguments, replies to objections. Others might regard her pretensions as futile; it is plain she never lost hope. The Pope was her advocate—provided her candidature was sufficiently hopeful to warrant the publication of his briefs; Azzolino was labouring on her behalf, and she refused to be disheartened. As late as June 1669, when the election was at hand, she was entering at length into the objections urged against her. Amongst others, the Monaldesco scandal had been revived, and it is interesting to find how, after the lapse of years, she treated the ghastly story.

"I am not in the humour," she wrote, "to justify myself to Messieurs the Poles for the death of an Italian. I have no account to render to them on that matter,

though I could easily do so." It was notorious that, more especially in Poland, persons of lower rank than hers executed justice on their dependants, when and how they pleased, without being called to account for it. It might, however, be stated "that this man forced me to put him to death by the blackest treachery possible from servant to master, that I ordered his execution only after having convicted him of his crime by letters in his handwriting . . . in the presence of three witnesses, and of the Father Prior of Fontainebleau, who were all present and heard his own confession. They know that I had all the Sacraments of which he was capable administered to him before I put him to death. Besides, I have never desired to keep this death secret; his Holiness cannot be ignorant of it; and, since it has not prevented him from recommending me, he cannot consider this affair a reasonable obstacle." [1]

To all conditions imposed upon her, Christina declared herself ready to subscribe, save that of marriage.

"Remember," she reiterated in February 1669—"remember that I will die sooner than allow myself to be compelled to marry." [2]

The amount of correspondence entailed both by the incessant wrangles with the Swedish Government and by the Polish question was enormous; and, though in the last case the bulk of it passed through Azzolino's hands, Christina was personally responsible for all that was done. "You must know," she told the Nuncio, when some doubt had been expressed, "that I never sign anything I have not first read; and in an affair of the importance of that now in question I am incapable of acting blindly." [3]

In the end, all the foreign candidates were rejected, a King being selected from amongst the native nobles.

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii, p. 387. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iii., p. 381.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

Christina accepted her defeat, it may well be believed, with something approaching to relief—it was certainly with sang-froid. "The news from Poland," she wrote to the Comte de St. Pol—probably ignorant of her personal interest in the matter—"surprised me as it did you. The astonishing events in that country make us see clearly that blind Fortune dispenses crowns as she chooses and by chance. Had justice been the dispenser, that crown would have been bestowed upon the Prince de Condé—of all the claimants most worthy to receive it. However that may be, his glory and merit may console him for Fortune's injustice." [1]

Christina may or may not have indulged in private regrets for the throne that had been denied her. From the humiliation involved in notorious failure she was saved; since, whether through her own caution or that of her friends, so strangely secret had the matter been kept, that the struggle upon which she had entered, together with her defeat, appears to have been unsuspected by Europe at large. The world never grasped sufficiently to deride it the fact that Christina had been amongst the competitors for the vacant throne, and she was spared what sting there might have been in public ridicule.

There was one respect in which, during the months following upon the Queen's return to Rome, she could have fully established her right to be considered as an injured woman. On her first arrival in Italy her financial affairs had seemed to be settled on a fairly satisfactory footing; and, though this was due rather to the Diet than to the Swedish Regency, she had thought it well to express her contentment to the Chancellor and others in authority. [1] The Estates had, in fact, passed resolutions couched in language containing a tacit reprobation of the hostile attitude of the Regency towards the daughter of a King of whom they had not

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 395.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 335.

forgotten to be proud. Had Christina let well alone, peace might possibly have ensued. But she was not disposed to forgo taking vengeance for the treatment she had received in Sweden; and, when it became known that it was her intention to dismiss from their posts in her domains those senators or their kin who had incurred her resentment on that occasion, and to replace them by her partisans, a counter-stroke was promptly delivered in the renewal of the threat made through Kleihe to deprive her of any share in the administration of the provinces forming her appanage, and to cause her revenues to be paid through the authorities. Though not repudiating its engagements, the Government was bent upon stripping the discrowned Queen of any semblance of sovereignty she had hitherto retained.

The measure was bitterly resented by Christina, who, having resigned the sceptre, clung tenaciously to the shadow of royal authority remaining to her. But the Diet was dissolved, and she had once again to treat with a body mainly composed of her enemies, suspicious of her every action, and headed by her enemy-in-chief, Magnus de la Gardie. She had, however, no intention of submitting tamely to injustice, and the tone of her instructions to Rosenbach, her agent in Sweden, was almost that of a reigning sovereign.

"Tell those who object to my letter," she wrote, with reference to her officers and subordinates, "that, should the text of it displease them, they will do well not to compel me to add its commentary; for, upon my word, it will please them still less. This is all I have to say to you."[1]

She replied to further representations of the actual state of affairs in Sweden in terms no less peremptory.

"Your letter of December 26," she told Rosenbach, "would have caused any one except myself alarm; but

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 397.

I confess it amused me greatly. I care little for the rhodomontades of the Grand Chancellor. I am acquainted with them, and believe the Swedish Council to be too wise to execute a resolution so much opposed to reason and justice. In case they do so, we must console ourselves, for consequences will follow making them regret that resolution too late." [1]

Reflection, it is true, convinced the Queen that power was, for the present, on the side of the Regency ; and, though her anger remained unabated, her language became more temperate. But whilst it might be necessary for a time to dissemble, ultimate submission was as far as ever from her mind, and she would have rejoiced at an opportunity of meeting her foes in open fight. "You have only to tell me," she wrote to Rosenbach, "when it is time to throw off the mask, and I will do so in a manner to make my enemies—enemies still more of Sweden than of myself—tremble." [2] To signs of conciliation on the part of the Regency she was slow to respond, nor did she receive their ultimate concessions graciously.

"What has been restored was my due," she wrote, "but if the rest is not set on a proper footing I shall be as ill satisfied as had they continued to outrage me. I am determined to maintain my rights."

Thus the quarrel was carried on through the pleasant months of Clement IX.'s pontificate, quickly drawing towards its close. Enough has been said to convey an idea of the undercurrent of financial troubles and difficulties almost from first to last forming an accompaniment to Christina's existence. Before the close of the year 1669 they were to be superseded by interests of another nature, by which her attention was to be temporarily absorbed.

On September 6 the capitulation of Candia had taken place, representing the failure of the projects

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 398. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iii., p. 403.

upon which the heart of Clement IX. had been set, and the downfall of his hopes. His health, never strong, and undermined by care and anxiety, did not recover from the blow, and on December 9 he passed away.

Christina was amongst the many mourners for a Pope universally loved and honoured. When, a week before the end, he summoned to his side those of whom he wished to take leave, she was included in the number. "He bade her," wrote Mgr. de Bourlemont to Louis XIV., "as tender an adieu as possible, in a manner to draw tears from the eyes of that princess." [1]

Clement IX. was dead. Who would succeed him? The question, important to Europe at large, was a momentous one to Azzolino, and through him, to Christina. It remained to be decided.

[1] Bildt, *Christine de Suède et le Conclave de Clément X.*, p. 15.

CHAPTER XXIII[1]

1669–70

Who was to be the new Pope?—Christina's part in the struggle—Azzolino's future at stake—Tactics of opposed parties—General duplicity—Spanish and French ambassadors—Election of Cardinal Altieri, Clement X.

CLEMENT IX. was dead. If the event were acknowledged to be a catastrophe so far as the spiritual interests of the Church were concerned, it gave rise to grave anxiety far and wide amongst statesmen and politicians throughout Europe, and the eyes of all were directed towards the centre of Catholicism. Who was to be the coming Pope? Spain and France, the two great Catholic Powers and rivals, each coveted a share in making answer to that question, and were preparing to measure their strength against one another in the attempt to secure the election of a pontiff favourable to their interests.

The long struggle, lasting between four and five months, is not of any great intrinsic interest. But the story of Christina's part in the fight throws too much light upon her character and methods, and is likewise too instructive as to the degree of importance attached to her influence, to be passed over in silence. The history of these months tells of one of the last stirring episodes of a life which, after many vicissitudes, was for the future to be passed in comparative tran-

[1] For the material for this chapter I am indebted to the Baron de Bildt's volume, *Christine de Suède et le Conclave de Clément X.*

quillity. In spite of the labour involved, there can be no doubt that Christina enjoyed it.

To her the crisis was one of special moment. It was true that Azzolino, by reason of his youth—he was still under fifty—and from other causes, was not amongst those whose election was within the range of possibility ; and only on a single occasion does the Queen allude to the subject. Placing however his personal elevation out of the question, there was abundance of interest and excitement in the trial of strength which was taking place, and her whole forces were enlisted in the attempt to further Azzolino's views. Sincerely anxious to secure the election of a Pope whose rule and government should be of advantage to the Church, neither was it possible that she should forget that the Cardinal's career and the position he had enjoyed under Clement IX. were at stake. He was not a man protected from animosity by insignificance. The "Flying Squadron" in the Sacred College, of which he was the leader and moving spirit, though counting few members, made up in ability, intellect, and strenuous activity what was lacking to it numerically. In independence of attitude it stood almost alone, untrammelled by obligations or pledges, political or personal, and free to confer its support upon the man it judged most worthy to fill the vacant office. Compared with the other factions into which the Cardinals were divided, each bent upon the furtherance of private aims and objects, the Squadron stood high in character and influence, and was admitted by friends and foes alike to be a principal force to be reckoned with. Upon the question whether the new Pope would be selected from amongst his adherents or his opponents hung Azzolino's future.

In forming a judgment upon a chapter of history, there are many things besides actual facts to be taken into account ; and the condition of society, the moral

and ethical standards of the day, the political atmosphere of the environment, must be allowed their due weight. Yet, when all this has been done, it must be admitted that upon the whole a melancholy and sordid story is contained in the curious and detailed account of the struggle given by Baron de Bildt. Good men, upright, God-fearing, and single-minded in their endeavours to do their duty, no doubt there were—glimpses are to be caught of them now and then—but they kept for the most part in the background, sick at heart, surely, at the spectacle before them ; and, hopeless of making their voices heard, left the foreground to be occupied by scheming intriguers.

Men lied boldly ; it was almost a recognised privilege. They were not expected to speak the truth either to ally or to opponent ; nor were they ashamed of their falsehood unless they had been clumsy enough to be found out. Deceit or treachery was only treated as a scandal by those who suffered from it. Azzolino, who, by common consent, was allowed to be at the head of the most high-minded party in the Sacred College, scarcely differed in this respect from the rest, although he was severe in his reprobation of the tactics of others.

"I feel," he wrote bitterly, when the French faction had proved false to its word, "a certain fear at the thought that some chastisement might befall us for having been so closely connected with men who know and observe the laws neither of God nor the Church" ; and upon a similar occasion, when duplicity had been practised by the Spanish ambassador, the Cardinal gave utterance to the singularly candid threat that henceforth he and his friends would hold themselves at liberty to labour for God's service alone, as might seem good to them. But his righteous wrath was reserved for the double-dealing of opponents ; nor did he himself hesitate, upon occasion, to depart from the truth.

Falsehood being a practically recognised weapon in the struggle, it was not to be expected that diplomatists would prove more scrupulous than Churchmen. Upon the Spaniard, Astorga, weak and wavering, and described by Christina as a "sot contemplatif," it was impossible to count; and though the Duc de Chaulnes, French ambassador, might lament, in a moralising mood, the absence of veracity prevailing in Rome, he admitted in a dispatch to Louis, in respect to his own habits, that little lies were sometimes of use, and did not cost an ambassador much in time of conclave, when he was forced by his position to do little else than tell them.

At the same time it is worth noting that, in spite of the subordinate place to which the interests of religion were often relegated, most of the candidates put forward by the several parties appear to have been men who would have filled the pontifical throne not unworthily. Vidoni, in particular, in whose cause Azzolino and, through him, Christina laboured unweariedly throughout the months of the conclave, was a man against whose character little could be alleged, save one whispered charge, founded or unfounded, of some lapse from strict morality in the past. He was a strong man—Azzolino showed no desire to exalt a weak Pope, whom he might have hoped to rule—capable, energetic, and enjoying a reputation for justice and rectitude. To raise Vidoni to the Papal throne neither Azzolino nor Christina spared themselves toil and care; if personal interest had its share in spurring them to energy it is fair to remember that they were justified in feeling that they were likewise labouring for the good of the Church.

That the two were identical in aim was recognised on all hands, and outside the walls of the Vatican the Queen was accepted as Azzolino's representative. For this reason, rather than owing to her personal rank,

position, and abilities, she was worth conciliating by states or schemers, and was sought and flattered by the agents of France and of Spain, each endeavouring to enlist her on their side, and to obtain through her the co-operation of one of the most powerful actors in the intricate and complicated drama that was being played out.

In nowise reluctant to fill the place assigned her, Christina entered upon her task with ardour. Not more scrupulous in adherence to truth than others, she set herself to pull the strings according to Azzolino's directions ; now attempting the propitiation of France ; now making profession of her devotion to Spain ; discreet with a discretion at variance with her nature and habits ; deliberately throwing dust in the eyes of those it was politic to deceive ; and day by day, with unwearied industry, making detailed reports to Azzolino of the fashion in which his instructions had been obeyed. So occupied, it is probable that the months of the conclave were some of the happiest of Christina's life. For once, duty and pleasure coincided—or seemed to coincide. Working for the Cardinal, she doubtless believed she was labouring for the Church whose interests, to her acute, critical, and crooked mind, were bound up with his. Should Vidoni become Pope, his future was assured. Should failure attend his efforts and a pontiff be elected in spite of his opposition, his career might be considered closed. Setting this consideration on one side, power was dear to the woman who had resigned it ; she was unfeignedly proud of her capacities and abilities—prouder, perhaps, of being the instrument upon which Azzolino relied ; and was eager to prove herself competent, and to do her share in the making of history.

On December 19 the conclave began. Amongst the crowds who repaired to the Vatican to take leave

of the Cardinals was Christina, giving proof of her new-born discretion by remarking aloud, in reference to Vidoni, Azzolino's candidate : " En voilà un qui n'est pas papable."

It was important to secure means of free communication with Azzolino, and the Queen had taken measures accordingly. Messengers dispatched from the quarter of the city in which her palace was situated would have been compelled, before being admitted to the neighbourhood of the Vatican, to show the medal serving as their passport, and undesirable attention might have been drawn to the communications passing between Queen and Cardinal. But Christina had evaded this difficulty. In view of the chance that, under a new Pope, Azzolino might be deprived of the official apartments he had occupied at the Vatican, she had already leased a residence known as the Palazzo d'Inghilterra for his use ; from which, owing to its position, a messenger could pass unchallenged. Here she arranged for the present a room where her letters might be written, and whence they could at any time be dispatched.

The necessity of secrecy was the one point all the combatants were agreed upon. Without it, success could scarcely be expected. Were it to be known that Azzolino was fighting on behalf of Vidoni, all his enemies—and he had many—would address themselves to the task of rendering his labours vain. As far as possible it was considered necessary to assume, if not a hostile, an indifferent attitude towards the very man in whose service every nerve was to be strained. The work had to be carried on in the dark ; and words of Azzolino's to a representative of Cardinal Chigi, head of the most numerous faction in the Sacred College, sent to sound him, indicate the spirit in which he [illegible]red upon the campaign. He was neither, he [illegible], Vidoni's intimate nor was he his enemy ; he

did not consider himself bound by conscience to damage him. If, however, Vidoni had been ruined by his adherents, he did not regret it.

It was in the like spirit that he expected Christina to act outside the walls of the Vatican. None were to know her secret purpose and aim. At times, indeed, his instructions went further than counsels of mere negative prudence, as when there was a danger of the election of Odescalchi, afterwards Innocent XI., whom Azzolino in nowise desired to see Pope. Let her tell the truth, he said, upon this occasion, with the certainty that it would not be believed. Hearing from her that Azzolino and his friends were opposed to Odescalchi's candidature his enemies would take it for granted that she was attempting to deceive them, would believe him to be favourable to the project, and would therefore endeavour to defeat the object they conceived he had in view—a curiously intricate course of reasoning. The defect in the Cardinal's policy was indeed an over-elaboration by which he occasionally over-reached himself. Thus, on one occasion, he purposely dropped a letter addressed to Christina, in the expectation that it would be found and read, and would mislead others—a too transparent ruse to succeed ; whilst another time, when Odescalchi's cause appeared to be prospering, he followed a yet more devious path. Retz, belonging of course to the French faction, had offered his congratulations to the Cardinal upon his expected elevation. Azzolino, reflecting uneasily upon the absence of any past civility on his own part towards the man who seemed destined to become Pope, not only wrote him a friendly note, but took credit for having prompted the advances made by Retz, implying that he himself had striven to forward his interests. It was a bold step and proved signally unfortunate ; the missive fell by misadventure into the hands of another French Cardinal, Bouillon, instead of those for which it was intended ;

Retz was made acquainted with Azzolino's manœuvre, and the trick was unveiled.

It was on such lines as these—the more repulsive because the question was of no mere earthly sovereignty, but of the choice of a ruler to reign over the spiritual kingdom—that the fight was carried on. Times there will have been, or so one would imagine, when Christina—not, left to herself, destitute of a certain rough uprightness—must have sickened at the spectacle. It is indeed plain that when self-interest, or rather Azzolino's interest, did not blind her, she was sufficiently clear-sighted. Machiavelli and Tacitus, she once observed, in reference to a student of their works, were clever men, but had produced many fools and many *fripons*; a person did not always become clever by becoming *canaille*, and, if not persuaded that virtue is worth more than fortune, and honour than interest, he may believe that he deceives others, but it is himself that he deceives.

Christina would have done well at this juncture had she taken these maxims personally to heart; but her severity, like Azzolino's, was reserved for those who lied to further objects opposed to her own. Of these her reprobation was unmitigated. "Astorga's proceedings," she told one of his subordinates, "are unworthy of an ambassador, a gentleman, and a man of honour." But then Christina had never liked the "sot contemplatif." When the Duc de Chaulnes was in question, though she might feel disapproval or distrust, he had the lightness of touch of a Frenchman, and was clever at conciliating those it was worth while to please. His first informal visit to the Queen was paid the very day after he reached Rome; and when she informed him that Azzolino, as leader of the "Flying Squadron," ordered, disposed, and did all, whilst appearing to do nothing, he probably left her in the persuasion that she had convinced him of the

truth of her statements. Already, in pursuance of the policy of duplicity adopted on all hands, she had assured the Spanish agent that Vidoni had been placed by France on its list of excluded candidates, with the certainty that this exclusion would tend to win him the support of Spain; and, with a similar object, she now told Chaulnes that he was secretly vetoed by Spain. Whether he possessed the suffrages of the Squadron, she declared herself unable to say. Let the Duke confide in Azzolino, open his heart to him, and all that was possible would be done to further his wishes.

Chaulnes, on his part, not to be outdone, asserted his readiness to sacrifice any persons obnoxious to the Cardinal and his party.

"Celsi and Bonvisi, should it be desired?" asked Christina, naming two candidates understood to be supported by France.

"Alas! with entire resignation," was the Duke's reply. "Let them be drowned or hung. I agree with all my heart."

So the negotiations proceeded, the deference paid to the Queen by the rival parties marking their estimate of her importance. Time was passing, and in April it seemed as if the end were no nearer. Hostilities became embittered as the fight was prolonged and as fears increased lest a Pope who should have wrongs to avenge should be placed upon the throne. Though Easter produced a lull, the truce could be only temporary. Christina had retired to a convent, but she was kept informed there by the Duc de Chaulnes of all that was going forward; and upon the very day that she emerged he paid her a visit and made the singular suggestion that she should personally undertake to effect a reconciliation of the three lesser parties in the Sacred College with the two ambassadors, and a party

should thereby be created strong enough to carry all before it.

The Duke might have been sincere. He might, on the other hand, have been indulging in some of the little lies he found so useful. With his flattering assurances in her ears that he was willing to make Christina arbitress of his master's interests, and that she alone in the world was capable of performing the work he had in view, it would not have been a difficult matter to induce her to attempt the task he assigned her; but nothing came of the plan, save some additional excitement on her part; and things went on as before.

The end, when it came, took many people by surprise. It had become patent that a decision must be made. No man of strength and intellect appeared to have a chance of overcoming the opposition he would evoke; and, in some haste, Cardinal Altieri, eighty years of age, was fixed upon by a combination of parties who, united, could command sufficient votes to ensure his election. Azzolino's incessant toil, seconded by Christina's efforts, on behalf of Vidoni, had been labour lost. In the last days of April Altieri was made Pope. The secret had been well kept, and, until the result of the intrigue was a practical certainty, Azzolino had had no suspicion of the stroke contemplated by men some of whom had been counted amongst his firmest allies.

One singular fact remains to be told. The man who had been raised to the highest position in the Church received the tidings of his elevation with genuine sorrow, making what efforts were possible to escape the greatness thrust upon him. Would they not let him die in peace? the old man prayed those who crowded to his cell to announce the news. His lamentations were unheeded, and, though even when the votes had been cast, he renewed his supplications to be freed from the burden laid upon him,

he was forced in the end to yield, and the reign of Clement X. began.

To Azzolino and to Christina the event was a catastrophe. By no manipulation of the facts could it be made to appear that the new Pope was indebted to the former for his elevation, and it is said that the change in their position was at once made clear. When the Queen hastened to offer her congratulations at the Vatican, no one came to receive her at the foot of the stairs, and her compliments duly paid, she departed as she had come, "but with so melancholy a mien that it was well known that she was not pleased."

CHAPTER XXIV

1670–6

The new pontificate—Christina's pretensions—Her patronage of art—generosity to literary men—And to converts—Del Monte at Stockholm—Christina's letter to Bourdelot—Sweden at war—Innocent XI.

WHATEVER may have been the effect upon Europe of the death of Clement IX. and the collapse of his enterprises against the Turk, life in Rome continued to present much the same aspect as during his reign. An old man and feeble, Clement X. was not disposed to initiate changes or to seek to interfere with what went on around him ; and whilst the more serious schemes of the dead Pope had passed away with him, the same magnificence, the same constant diversion which had marked his pontificate, prevailed during that of his successor. Rome was intent upon amusing itself, and it succeeded.

Dramatic representations were especially in fashion, and in the arrangement of matters of this kind Christina was a conspicuous figure, arousing the jealousy of the Roman nobility by the arrogance of her claims to pre-eminence. That her box should occupy a central position at the theatre, and should differ in character from those of the rest of the audience, might seem of small importance ; but it was resented by those who regarded her as an interloper and a foreign guest ; and, when she went so far as to protest against the Princess Colonna's *loggia* on the Corso being opposite her own, there was still greater trouble. The Constable Colonna threatened

to have the entertainments he was accustomed to provide for his friends and kin performed elsewhere ; and, when Christina appealed to the Pope for the redress of her grievances, Clement replied by pointing out the impossibility of excluding the general public from such spectacles, adding that she must permit the great Roman families to assist at them in their own fashion. Though indignant, the Queen was forced to acquiesce, obtaining as a concession the order that men should remain uncovered on these occasions. Her connection with Azzolino secured her the adhesion of a party amongst his colleagues ; her box at the theatre and her balcony on the Corso were largely frequented by members of the Sacred College, and it is noted as a curious fact that Odescalchi, who, as Innocent XI., was to be uncompromising in his condemnation of theatrical representations, was one of the most assiduous of her guests.

Christina, however, did not confine herself to pastimes of this nature. She had turned again, with no abatement of her old enthusiasm, to the part of a patroness of letters and art. The most distinguished men of learning were accustomed to meet under her roof, or to hold their conferences in the gardens of her palace ; and, as she acted as the presiding genius on these occasions, she must have felt that the dreams of her youth were in some degree realised.

Her intercourse with these men, often poor and needy, displayed a spirit strikingly at variance with the self-assertion of her bearing when brought into contact with others who might be expected to presume upon their rank and position. In the republic of letters she was not ashamed to confess her inferiority, disclaiming the praises lavished upon her by flatterers, or pointing to Azzolino as alone worthy of them—Azzolino, who, as she wrote on one occasion, was equal to Alexander, save in birth, opportunity, and fortune.

Destitute of every human weakness, he possessed all the talents and virtues constituting the greatness of man.[1] Letters such as these contain a genuine note of humility, not without a touch of pathos. "I wish," she wrote to a M. de Court, acknowledging some complimentary quotation, "that the passage were applicable. But, if it is not so in my case, it applies admirably to one of my friends. You must be aware that it is of Cardinal Azzolino that I speak. . . . When you mention all that is great in merit in Rome, do not forget the greatness of him who is alone worthy . . . of your praise. You are very happy to be still young," she adds a little wistfully; "I would that I were young too, so that I might cherish the hope of becoming something. But when fifty years have left one worth nothing, can one ever be any good? Were it possible, I would still force myself to become that which you show that you imagine me to be." [2]

Not only was she lavishly generous towards the necessitous, but often secretly so. "Christina," wrote Carini, "used her substance in the service of the most needy and the worthiest. There was not a mendicant who was not lifted out of his misery, nor a man of letters she did not heap with honours and gifts.[3] To her encouragement of learning and literature was ascribed the formation of the Society of Arcadians, founded after her death by men who had all graduated in her school, and been members of her Academy, and the effect of her support has been widely acknowledged."

"It may safely, I think, be asserted," says Ranke, "that she . . . exercised a strong and permanent influence on her age, and especially on Italian literature." [4]

This work was not carried on without cost; and to meet the demands upon her purse arising out of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 46. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[3] Quoted by Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 135.
[4] *History of the Popes*, vol. iii., p. 72.

the needs of her literary friends taxed her slender resources severely. To Archbishop della Noce—one of the original members of her Academy, and in pecuniary difficulties—she sent two hundred ducats, apologising for the insufficiency of the gift, corresponding neither to her desire nor his deserts. "But you are avenged by my blushing for it. Say nothing to any one if you do not wish to give mortal offence to the Queen." [1] The poet Filicaia had also profited by her generosity, his two sons being educated at her expense, though in secret, "lest she should have to blush for doing so little for a man she esteemed so much." Yet even in dealing with these votaries of art her inordinate vanity was apparent. When Cardinal Thomasi, in dedicating a work to her, prefixed the term Serenissime to her name, she ordered the adjective to be removed, on the grounds that the simple term Christina said more, standing alone, and, when Mabillon made a like well-intentioned mistake, he was called to account. Titles or praises could do no more than derogate from the lustre of her name.

The needs of literary men were not alone in making demands upon her purse. A kinsman of her own, son of the illegitimate daughter of an uncle, found by her secretary starving in the streets of Rome, was recognised by her at once as her cousin, summoned to her presence, all ragged as he was, provided with what was necessary and sent to be enrolled in the Venetian army. Another countryman, begging to be admitted into her guards, was granted his request, provided he changed his name, Struzzenskiöld—"un nom de diable"—for one a Christian could pronounce; and these were only two instances out of many.

Neither charities nor the amusements of life at Rome could be carried on without funds. Supplies

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 146.

from Sweden were as uncertain as ever ; and, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by the assembling of the Diet upon the occasion of the young King's attainment of his majority, Christina decided to send an envoy-extraordinary to Stockholm, to quicken the zeal of her resident officers, providing him with voluminous instructions as to the demands to be made on the Swedish authorities.

Her choice had fallen upon the Marquis del Monte, now the principal member of her household. His rank, as well as his claim—disallowed by the family with which he strove to identify himself—to be descended from an Italian branch of the Bourbons, may have caused her to select him for the post of ambassador ; and though, like others of Christina's servants, he failed to inspire others with the same confidence as his mistress, he seems, where her interests were concerned, to have been not altogether undeserving of her trust. That she considered him to be in a sense her own handiwork may have contributed to render her estimate of him favourable. "Your father of happy memory," she wrote after his death to his son, "had less capacity than you when I began to form him. Since then he rapidly became the great Minister we know. 'Les hommes font les affaires, mais les affaires font aussi les hommes' "—a saying which is a good example of Christina's terse command of language.

Del Monte acquitted himself of his duties to his mistress's entire approval. Had he not done so it would have been for no lack of directions from Rome, the interminable directions he had brought with him being constantly supplemented by letters of fresh admonition and advice. "You are in a country," the Queen warned him, "where you must trust only what you can touch with your hand. Take care not to drink ; make love as much as you please ; but

if my favour is dear to you, do not drink." [1] And he was to stand upon his dignity, to take too high rather than too low a tone, and to insist upon being placed upon an equality with all foreign ministers not of the actual rank of ambassadors. She would have sent the Queen-Mother gloves and scents were they not likely to be suspected of being poisoned, she observed caustically. The horses presented by her to the King would probably be thrown into a well. That, whilst leaving it to Azzolino to give detailed orders to her envoy on some subjects, she preserved her independence of judgment on others, is indicated by the injunction given to her secretary on one occasion to copy a portion of her directions separately and not to show them to the Cardinal.[2]

By January, 1673, the Queen had learnt that, so far as promises were concerned, del Monte had accomplished the objects of his mission. The engagements made at her abdication were again confirmed ; the somewhat barren concession of freedom of worship for herself and her Court was granted ; and justice was to be done upon her faithless servant, Appelmann. She was well content.

"You accomplish miracles, Marquis," she wrote, in the fulness of her satisfaction. "Your services and your labours bind me to an eternal gratitude for your affection, fidelity, and capacity in serving me." With the incurable optimism she was apt to display, she was assured that all was well ; even the road to Sweden, had she been disposed to tread it, being thrown open by the removal of the religious difficulty. It was not likely that Christina would turn her steps northwards. "Let the affection I cherish for my country be known," she told her envoy, "though I have not the least intention of a return thither. That is impossible, and God preserve me from its ever coming to pass."

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., p. 431. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iii., p. 435.

A suspicion of her sentiments on the subject may have facilitated what was probably felt to be no more than an empty compliment.

Towards the end of the year 1674 Christina is found again addressing her former acquaintance, Bourdelot in a letter containing bitter complaints as to the aspersions upon her character contained in the volumes edited by Linage de Vauciennes and purporting to be the memoirs of Chanut, drawn from his dispatches. Modern criticism has decided that for a portion of the book the Queen's old friend is not responsible, and it was natural enough that the fact that his name should be thus misused should have roused her indignation. "Me calomnier, c'est attaquer le soleil," was the attitude she took up.[1] After thanking Bourdelot for the measures he appears to have taken respecting the book, she goes on to express her feelings with regard to it. "I have all the necessary disposition to despise and pardon this sort of folly, which injures those alone who commit it. But I think that I owe something to my reputation which I will not refuse it. I assure you, nevertheless, that I am acting without grief or disquietude. The century we live in consoles me; quarter is given to none, and the greatest merits are the ones most commonly calumniated. For my part, I have accustomed myself to the ingratitude of mankind, and have long been exposed to envy and deceit. My consolation is that my conscience reproaches me with nothing. Sweden, Rome, and all the other places where my life has been passed will, after my death at least, bear witness to the falsehood of these slanders, my name and my reputation being, thank God, too well established to have anything to fear. . . . What grieves me is that

[1] M. Arckenholtz is perplexed by the fact that Christina's letter was written three years before the publication of the earliest edition he could trace. But there seems no doubt as to the work to which she refers.

the book should bear the name of M. Chanut. I am certain that he did not write it, and I am sorry that a stain as black should be attached to the name of so good a man. . . . But this does not alter the fact that any one capable of publishing things of this kind is unworthy to live and must be the most infamous of men." [1]

Meanwhile war in Germany, undertaken principally in the interests of France, was to follow upon del Monte's mission to Stockholm, and to go far to rob it of its fruits. It was necessary, under these circumstances, that Christina's interests should be carefully watched, the more so that the domains from which her revenues were drawn were in danger of suffering most; and during the year 1674 an envoy was again dispatched to Stockholm.

The Queen's choice on this occasion had fallen upon the Count de Wassenau, illegitimate son of Uladislaw VII., King of Poland, and related to Christina herself. Having repaired to Rome on the death of his uncle, the late King, he had been recognised by the Queen as her cousin and given a post in her household, thereby incurring the jealousy of Azzolino and del Monte. Possibly, as has been suggested, through the instrumentality of those anxious for his absence, he was now dispatched to Sweden, where, charged with negligence and incapacity, he quickly fell under the Queen's displeasure, her weekly letters to him serving as examples of her powers of invective. She was scandalised at his loss of time; her fire and his phlegm harmonised ill; his delays were insupportable; his letters displayed a nonchalance, an insensibility, driving her to despair. She was ceasing to feel surprise, and was beginning to know that he was good for nothing, and was ashamed of her mistake in having thought well of him. His letters

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., pp. 156, 157.

should cause him to die of shame, but she saw clearly that he was incapable of recognising or correcting his faults—with much more of the same unmeasured abuse. It would seem that the unfortunate envoy had committed the error of appealing to Azzolino, thereby rousing his mistress to additional fury.[1]

"It seems," she wrote in September, 1674, "that you cannot take up your pen without uttering follies, and I am much offended by what you say of the Cardinal. I return your letter, which I have prevented from falling into his hands for reasons I need not mention. When you left, I perceived by your talk and actions that you belonged to the cabal of those who fill the Cardinal's head with errors and ill-founded suspicions ; but I did not believe you fool enough to place yourself in a position to be convicted of this crime by your own letters. The Cardinal is a divine and incomparable man. He is dearer to me than my life, and is all-powerful with me. But all his authority, all his credit, can neither excuse nor defend you, nor avert your ruin should you not change your line of conduct."

The unhappy Count—no doubt the victim of misrepresentation at Rome—was declared by those in a position to judge at Stockholm to have in no way failed in the performance of his duties ; and Christina at length allowed herself to be pacified, admitting that she was not dissatisfied with his behaviour, and that since he had in part performed his duty her anger was calmed.

Neither Wassenau nor any other envoy could have averted the injury to her finances entailed by the war. Christina had always deplored it, and her expectations of its probable result were soon in a fair way to be realised. With anger and sorrow she watched the

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iii., pp. 474–9.

Swedish disasters and the losses sustained. The Senate had rightly assumed red robes, she observed; they ought to blush for what took place in their assembly. What help did their crimson garb bring to the lost provinces? It was cause for laughter and for tears.

Troubles had not overtaken Christina singly; and if through the Swedish reverses a fresh element of anxiety, both patriotic and personal, was introduced into the coming years, changes at Rome had likewise supervened destined to interfere to no small degree with the course of her daily life.

In July 1676 Clement X. had died, to be succeeded by a man of a very different temper and calibre. This was Odescalchi, whose election, five years earlier, had been opposed by Azzolino, and who was now to reign under the name of Innocent XI. The son of a banker at Como, and, according to Bishop Burnet—a visitor at Rome about this time—better versed in finance than in theology, he was of blameless life and reputation, and his accession had been hailed with satisfaction by the populace. It was soon found that, although so gentle and humble that, in summoning his servants, he would do so conditionally on its being convenient to them to obey,[1] he held certain views inevitably bringing him into collision with a large number of his subjects, as well as with visitors at Rome. He had begun by setting an example of disinterestedness in making a practical protest against the nepotism which had become the curse of the Church by abolishing the places and pensions hitherto enjoyed by the relations of the reigning Pope; observing that, as he loved his nephew, Don Livio, he would, for that very reason, not have him in the palace.[2] But he was as severe in his dealings with others as with himself, and the

[1] Ranke's *History of the Popes*, vol. iii., p. 118.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 119.

conscientiousness governing his private life was no less apparent in his treatment of public questions. He was strongly tenacious of the rights and privileges of the Curia, and, in spite of his weakness, was so far from displaying a yielding disposition that he acquired the nickname of Papa Minga, owing to his habit of refusing requests by means of the vernacular term "minga." Bent upon restoring order to the exhausted treasury of the Holy See, it was likewise his endeavour to reform the morals of Rome, and to put an end to the life of continual gaiety and amusement prevailing there. Setting his face against the splendour and extravagance of preceding years, his court was arranged on principles of such rigid economy that, again according to Burnet, the expenses of his table were covered by a crown a day, another authority placing them at half that sum.

With his character and aims, Innocent was not likely to be in sympathy with a woman of Christina's tastes, habits, and love of pleasure; nor would the fact that she had been active during the conclave in seeking to secure the election of Cardinal Conti, brother to her major-domo and her lady-in-waiting, have prejudiced him in her favour. For the present, however, the forms of courtesy were maintained between them, and the pension of twelve thousand scudi she had been accustomed to receive from the Holy See was confirmed by the new Pope—an important matter at a time when her finances were in a condition causing her to talk of retirement into a convent. This last project, had she ever seriously entertained it, was soon abandoned, her means, supplemented by the assistance conferred by Innocent, permitting her to live—according to the envoy from Savoy—privately and quietly at Rome.

CHAPTER XXV

1676–9

Christina's schemes for obtaining the German provinces—Strained relations with the Pope—Turkish attack on Austria—Withdrawal of Christina's pension—Her letter on the subject—Attitude with regard to Molinos—And to the French religious persecution—Quarrels with Innocent.

TO live privately and quietly, whether in Rome or elsewhere, would not have been a feat that Christina would have found easy, and, though it may have been preferable to the conventual seclusion she had contemplated, it was not long before she was indulging, after her fashion, in hopes of rendering the practice of economy unnecessary. Her fresh schemes were no less chimerical than others which had preceded them.

Owing to the reverses suffered by Sweden in the war, many of the German provinces acquired at an earlier date had been lost; and it occurred to the Queen that the several Powers concerned might be induced to confer upon her the forfeited territory. The arrangement would, she had convinced herself, be welcomed by her native country as an alternative to permitting the provinces in question to remain in the hands of the enemy; and she proceeded at once to take measures to sound both the Emperor and Louis XIV. on the subject, a young Swede, named Cederkrans, being employed to push the business at the French Court and elsewhere.

"I have discovered in a very reliable quarter," she

told him, "that the confederates are resolved to give back to Sweden nothing she has lost." Under these circumstances, justice demanded that what had been conquered in her own reign should be restored to her, and God had preserved her in order that she might by this means render a signal service to her country. Her tone was, as always, not so much that of one who pleads for a grace as demands a right. "The Kingdom of Sweden," she wrote when Cederkrans had incurred her blame by writing of it as her fatherland, "is mine and the King's. The difference is that I owe all I am to God alone and the King to God and to me—of which it is well that people should be reminded."

She might be right in imagining the fact might be forgotten. Serious politicians must have found it difficult to treat her pretensions with becoming gravity; and her new scheme soon went to swell the number of those she had entertained and relinquished. By the year 1681, however, when Sweden was once more at peace, her former Queen was permitted to reap the benefit of returning prosperity; money was remitted with greater regularity, and the pressure of Christina's financial difficulties was in great measure relieved. If she was not satisfied it must be remembered that her expectations were not apt to be limited by reason, and that she considered that her claims against the Swedish Government amounted to no less than twelve million crowns.

Meantime the relations of Pope and Queen were not improving, and she was being made to feel that her position was no longer what it had been under Innocent's predecessors. Trifles indicated the change. Already she had been given cause for annoyance in enforced alterations with regard to the royal box she had erected in the new theatre; and the Pope's fulminations against the mixing of the sexes in dramatic

Alinari, photo, Rome.

POPE INNOCENT XI.

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entertainments could not fail to bring him into collision with the Queen, who had been instrumental in the production of some of the women who sang upon the Roman stage. Artists taking part in secular representations were declared disqualified from singing in churches, and paid performances were prohibited. To prohibit was, however, one thing ; to enforce prohibitions quite another. Rome was in nowise inclined to forgo its accustomed pastimes, and ways of evading obedience were devised. Singers were imported from abroad, and entertainments nominally private were open to all willing to pay for their admission.

Such matters were trivial enough, but trivialities create ill blood ; and Christina, no less than others, was disposed to resent the Pope's interference. At present, however, no open breach had taken place. She was on friendly terms with many of the members of the Sacred College, her influence being sufficient to cause the Savoyard Minister to press upon his Government the necessity of cultivating friendly relations with her in view of a fresh election, when her support might prove of weight.[1] Innocent, passing her house, had stopped his carriage and paid her an hour's visit ; and when, proceeding in the work of reform, the Pope had turned his attention to women's dress, the Queen, making a display of deference to his wishes when admitted to his presence, not only donned a gown of ostentatious simplicity, but caused all the ladies in her train to do the like. The victims of her whim could not restrain their laughter as they defiled before their mistress clad in these garments, and merriment was loud amongst the Roman ladies, who declared that, though the Queen might perform monkey tricks at her pleasure, they had no intention of imitating her. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that Christina, too, was laughing in her sleeve.[2]

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 219. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

The condition of Europe was, meantime, giving rise to general anxiety, fully shared by the Queen, whose interest in public affairs continued as great as if she had retained a place amongst reigning sovereigns. The unparalleled successes achieved by Louis XIV. and the ascendancy he had acquired were a source of uneasiness to all other powers; and his suspected complicity in the Turkish attack upon Austria roused Christina to profound indignation. Ranging herself with enthusiasm upon the side of the Emperor, she did her best to obtain financial aid for him from Innocent; and when the siege of his capital had been raised—chiefly through the intervention of the King of Poland—she forgot old grudges, and paid a cordial tribute to the assistance rendered by the Pope. It was possibly not until afterwards that she learnt that it was given in some degree at her own expense, and that the pension she had drawn from the Papal treasury was to be discontinued.[1] To the intimation sent her, through Azzolino, of the Pope's intention, she replied in terms of wrath and contempt.

"I can assure you," she told the Cardinal, "that you have given me the most welcome news in the world. I beg, for your own sake, that you will do me this justice. God, who knows my heart, knows that I will not lie. The twelve thousand crowns given me by the Pope was the single blot on my life, and I received it from the hand of God as the greatest mortification He could have inflicted for the humiliation of my pride. I see well that I am in favour with Him, since He has done me the singular grace of removing it with so much glory to me. Thus has God rewarded the little He has inspired me to do for Him. This favour that God has done me is worth

[1] Arckenholtz places the withdrawal of the pension at a date some years later. But Baron de Bildt appears to be right in believing that it took place at this juncture.

a thousand kingdoms, and I beseech Him to preserve me from the vanity to which I am tempted by so fair an occasion. My only regret is that a hundred thousand crowns a month could not be taken from me—assistance for the Emperor worthy of a Pope—since I should have had a little more merit in rejoicing at it. . . ." [1]

In the same spirit she communicated direct, through her secretary, with the Papal official, Cardinal Cibo, reiterating her gratitude at being released from her obligations to his master.

Private vexations apart, her joy in the repulse of the Ottoman attack was sincere, the more so that it struck a blow at the Emperor's French foes, at this date also hers. "Of all the memorable effects of this victory," she wrote to the Venetian ambassador, "I consider curing the world of the French malady the most important."

These sentiments were not gratifying to the French faction in the Sacred College; but Christina was rarely disposed to disguise her opinions or moderate her language in order to avoid giving offence, and, in apparent response to a protest, she emphatically declined to withdraw expressions she had used. "The Queen," she wrote, or caused to be written, "says and does nothing by chance, and renders an account of her words and acts to God alone. She has ever acted and spoken according to her pleasure, and will continue to do so, whether it pleases or displeases Messieurs the confederate Cardinals. It would be well they should remember that, as a lion must be permitted to roar, so the man is mistaken who hopes that her Majesty will ever change her language." [1]

Turning to local affairs, notwithstanding her spasmodic attempts to conform to the Pope's views on such matters as dress, Christina was becoming more

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 151. [1] *Ibid.*, t. iv., p. 119.

and more exasperated by reason of the rebuffs he administered. Again and again she approached him with some petition, to be met by a refusal, not always couched in courteous language. If there was no appeal from his decisions, she was not the woman to accept them with meekness; and it may have been in a fit of ill-temper after some scene of the kind that she told Bishop Burnet that not one of the four Popes she had known had possessed common sense.[1] That Innocent, for his part, was becoming more and more uncompromising in the severity of the discipline he enforced, may be inferred from the fact that women taking part in theatrical performances were liable to imprisonment, whilst three gentlemen, charged with having whispered during Mass, were promptly ejected from Rome.[2]

It was not alone with Innocent that Christina fell out. She had a special aptitude for creating difficulties in the way of peaceful social intercourse; and throughout her life this was specially the case where laws of etiquette were in question. She had at present contrived to complicate her relations with laymen and ecclesiastics alike by the ill-judged and unprecedented demand that the title of Excellency should be used in addressing the Marquis del Monte, returned from Sweden, and promoted to be master of her horse.

The Duke di Poli, her own major-domo, was one of the first to raise objections; foreign ambassadors naturally did the same; and even the Sacred College resisted Azzolino's endeavours to induce them to defer to the Queen's wishes. The affair, important enough as affecting Christina's relations with those around her, is only worth mentioning as an illustration of that arrogant disregard of customs and conventions

[1] Lacombe, *Lettres secrètes*, p. 127.
[2] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 237.

which could not fail to produce collisions with her neighbours.

Her health, like Innocent's, was showing signs of decline, and probably did not conduce to a more pacific and conciliatory state of mind. Repeated proofs of the Pope's disregard of her wishes gave rise to a desire to retaliate where retaliation was possible; and not only did she oppose him on practical matters, but, when Molinos was consigned to prison, she took up his cause, "saying all that anger could inspire to an infernal fury."

More than one motive may have combined to enlist her sympathy on behalf of the Quietist leader. Though Christina was no blind disciple, and had from time to time asserted her independence of judgment in dealing with him, he had at one time acted as her confessor; the two had weekly conferences; and Azzolino had fallen under the suspicion of showing him undue favour. In Christina's opinion he was a holy man, "although," she added—in apparent allusion to some lack of asceticism—"I have little belief in saints who eat"; she, somewhat inconsistently, sent the prisoner food from her own house, and proved herself ready, in letters to the Archbishop of Palermo, to co-operate with his friends on his behalf.[1] A letter to himself, in apparent reference to his having misquoted her opinions, is nevertheless evidence that she was as ready, upon occasion given, to rate the great theologian as any mere secular delinquent. He was mistaken, she told him, in asserting that she had spoken ill of the Pope, no one having greater veneration for his sacred dignity than herself. But were it—through his misfortune or hers—true, her reputation would not be injured thereby, since every one was aware that she only praised or blamed justly. Granted—what she did not grant—that she had spoken ill of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., pp. 36–9.

his Holiness, she would yet be the first to shed her blood for him; and when he should be abandoned by sycophants she would spend for him life and all she possessed. After dealing with other points upon which she had been misrepresented she administered a final admonition. "Molinos mio, I venerate and love you as a saint; but break my head no more with these follies." Let him make the sign of the cross, for they were certainly suggested by a demon, and a demon, moreover, ill acquainted with her.[1]

Apart from more praiseworthy motives, it can scarcely be doubted that to have fallen under Innocent's ban was sufficient to secure the Queen as a partisan—in which she was perhaps at one with other malcontents suffering from the severity of the Papal discipline. "He who speaks is sent to the galleys; he who writes is hung; he who remains quiet is flung into prison. What must we do?" was a saying current in Rome at the time.

Her attitude towards Molinos was not, however, the only proof given by Christina of a spirit of tolerance in advance of her time. It is on paper that she shows to the greatest advantage; and there are letters in which the justness of judgment, the wisdom and the uprightness displayed, take those by surprise who are aware how frequently her actions showed a lack of most of these qualities. One such epistle, addressed in 1685 to her old acquaintance, Terlon, expresses, without any cautious economy of truth, her opinion as to the religious persecutions then taking place in France. Too long to be quoted in full, some passages from it may serve to show the position she took up.[2]

"Since you desire to know my feelings as to the pretended extirpation of heresy in France, I am

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, pp. 434–6.
[2] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 232 *et seq.*

enchanted to tell you them ; and, since I profess to fear and to flatter no man, I will own to you candidly that I am not much persuaded of the success of that great design, nor am I able to rejoice at it as at a thing advantageous to our holy religion ; on the contrary, I foresee the prejudice to which so novel a proceeding will give birth." After which she proceeded to express her doubts of the sincerity of the converts thus pressed into the Church. "Soldiers are strange apostles, and I believe them to be more fitted to kill, to rob, and to violate, than to convince. . . . I pity the people abandoned to their discretion ; I pity so many ruined families, so many honest folk reduced to depend upon charity ; and I cannot see what is going on in France to-day without compassion. I pity these unhappy ones for having been born in error, but they seem to me more worthy of compassion than of hatred ; and in the same way that not for the empire of the whole world would I share in their errors, neither would I cause their unhappiness."

If the attitude of the Gallican Church towards the Holy See—which she proceeded to characterise with severity—may have rendered her condemnation of its methods towards heretics more uncompromising than it might otherwise have been, there is abundant evidence of the loathing she felt for the cruelties—"choses infames," as she called them to a French visitor—practised in France.

Though without her permission, the Queen's letter was printed in the *Nouvelles de la République de Lettres*, by Bayle, who characterised it as a remains of Protestantism ; and whilst she was indignant at the charge, her indifference towards a proceeding calculated to exasperate the French authorities is an example of her fearlessness and independence. Admitting that she had been taken by surprise by the publicity given to her protest, she added that she did not repent having

written it; her chief regret appearing to be that it had been copied into the *Mercure Galant*, a publication for which she entertained unlimited contempt. Writing to her resident in Holland, she said that the only matter of importance was that she should not be suspected of having herself printed the letter; and that, her single object being to serve the Catholic religion, she was enchanted to hear that it had produced a good effect in Holland. After which, she proceeded to refer with regret to the bonfires lighted in Rome by the adherents of France in honour of the extirpation of heresy. "The incomprehensible ascendancy of France which kindled these fires did not prevent his Holiness from doing justice to my letter; but his Holiness has too much interest in the conciliation of France. . . . I myself, who in all the universe fear and respect none but God, and who venture to treat the idols of the day more cavalierly, acted like the rest, for you know that when you are at Rome you must live more or less like the Romans. But I am sufficiently punished by the cruel vengeance taken in putting me for the first time into the *Mercure Galant*"—a book where heroes and bourgeois were registered pêle-mêle, and which was filled with all the follies of the day.[1]

To some Protestant—possibly her own Governor-General—she had written in a like spirit, expressing her perplexity as to how the letter to Terlon had got into print, but stating that she felt no regret that it had been written; "for I fear no man, and pray God with all my heart that this false triumph of the Church may not cost her one day genuine tears." To the honour of Rome, she added, all those of intelligence and merit in the city regarded with compassion what was going on in a world furnishing so much cause for laughter and weeping.[2]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv, p. 133. [2] *Ibid.*, t. ii., p. 234.

Christina is seen at her best in such matters. Confronted with the realities of life, pettier qualities are merged in care for wider interests. In her wrangles over trivialities; in the egoism, self-assertion, and vanity too often marking her intercourse with those around her, a less attractive aspect of her character is shown. And during these later years her attention was unfortunately largely concentrated upon disputes between herself and the Pope.

Notwithstanding the veneration she paraded towards the Holy See, she was in no way inclined to defer to Papal authority where it clashed with her interests or caprices; and in Innocent she met her match in obstinacy, and more than her match in strength. With none of the disposition displayed by his predecessors to treat their unruly guest with indulgence, and as tenacious of his opinions and rights as herself, matters between the two went from bad to worse, till even the forms of conventional courtesy were abandoned. Forbidden the Pope's presence, the Queen was wont to say that his Holiness was like the snails of Como—his birthplace—which enclose themselves in their shells in the winter and thrust out their horns in the spring. Finding Rome, under its new conditions, intolerable, she had announced her intention of retiring to Hamburg, and had gone so far as to ask the Viceroy of Naples for the loan of transport vessels. It is scarcely conceivable, however, that she seriously contemplated a return to a city she cordially disliked, and the conviction that her departure would have caused unfeigned satisfaction to the Pope would not have tended to determine her upon the step. Already banished from Innocent's presence, she had been further affronted by a message to the effect that, were del Monte and his son not sent out of Rome, the precincts of the palace would likewise be forbidden her. Whatever may have been the Pope's reasons for this last demand

—and if the reports current concerning the Marquis were well founded they are not far to seek—he had probably exceeded his powers in making it ; and, on receiving a reply from Christina that, being a Queen, she claimed to be treated as such, he was compelled to waive the point at issue.[1] A truce was arranged between the belligerents, and the Queen was finally readmitted to an audience. The cessation of hostilities was not destined to be of long duration, and, when they were resumed, it was in an exaggerated form.

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 256.

CHAPTER XXVI

1679–87

Letters from Christina to Bourdelot—Her health and habits—Her final quarrel with the Pope—Its origin—and phases.

CHRISTINA'S life was nearing its end. Its catalogue of enterprises rashly undertaken and quickly abandoned, of headlong decisions as rapidly reversed, of inordinate expectations, of hopes and disappointments, of few successes and many failures, of follies, generous or criminal, was almost complete. But, as she had lived, she was to die, and her concluding years were, like those that had gone before them, to be spent in an atmosphere of contention.

Upon her condition of health, as well as upon her manner of life at this period, light is thrown by a couple of letters addressed by her, during the year 1679, to her former physician, Bourdelot. It would seem that, having heard of some indisposition from which she had suffered, the French doctor had testified a desire to prescribe from a distance for his old patient ; and, calling to mind that she considered that, under God, he had been once the means of saving her life, Christina replied to his admonitions at some length. Admitting that she was subject to sharp attacks of illness, she boasted that by her treatment of them, carried out in some respects in spite of her attendant physician, she succeeded in subduing the disorder, and that, so soon as the fever left her, she rose at once, went out of doors, and walked, as if she had never been ill. In spite of

medical advice, she never drank wine, ate only fruit and food of a refreshing character, and was frequently bled. Turning to other matters, she told him bluntly that she thought little of his compositions in verse; though, remembering that he was eighty, she did not withhold from him her admiration. In a letter of a month later she recurs with light-hearted malice to the same subject. "You did not consider your verses were sufficiently admired," she wrote, "and as a penance you want people to cut off their ordinary meals. You must be a frank Jansenist to give penances so severe, for it must be in the character of confessor, rather than of doctor, that you wish to make one die of hunger. Your advice would be good were you my steward and it was prompted by economy, at a time when money ran short. . . . Did you know what I eat, I am sure you would say there is nothing to retrench; however temperate any one might be, they could scarcely eat more sparingly. . . . I eat little and sleep less, for when I am well I am rarely more than five hours in bed. You know that formerly I slept still less; but in my great leisure, now that I am almost always mistress of my own time, I give a little more of it to repose, in order to refresh my constitution, which is nothing but fire and flame."[1]

It is clear that Christina, if she no longer looked upon Bourdelot as an oracle in matters of health, cherished a friendly remembrance of the charlatan who had been productive of so much bitterness of spirit in her old Court. Towards others connected with that time she was less indulgent; and a letter in reply to some request of Heinsius, at one time employed by her to collect books and manuscripts, is that of a woman at the end of her patience. Her secretary, to whom her letter is addressed, is to give him what he asks, but on condition that it is the last she hears of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 22.

him, since she is weary of sheltering his follies. As to Monaldesco (to whom the petitioner had evidently made unwise allusion), the whole of Westphalia might, if they pleased, believe him to be innocent—she is most indifferent to all that they may say. She forbids Heinsius to speak well or ill of her, being persuaded that he can utter nothing but follies.[1]

If Christina's temper had not improved with advancing years there can be no question that, to a proud woman, accustomed from childhood to submission and adulation, there had been not a little to try it. In the spring of 1687 the constant friction, open or disguised, between herself and Pope Innocent came to a head; and her remaining year of life was spent in a rarely intermitted struggle.

In this final passage of arms the Queen was undoubtedly in the wrong. On other occasions when she came into collision with the Pope something at least might be urged in her excuse; as when her theologian was thrown into prison on what she stoutly maintained was a false charge, and she admonished Innocent not to act upon first impressions and to display a greater amount of caution;[2] or when she interposed in an attempt to save the lives of two young men inexorably sentenced to death by Innocent, in spite of the extreme youth of one of the delinquents and the recommendation of the Criminal Congregation that the capital penalty should be remitted. Though Christina's appeals for mercy might lose some of their force owing to the fact that they proceeded from the relentless executioner of Monaldesco, she was not to be blamed for making them. The trial of strength begun in the year 1687 was another matter.

Whatever might be thought of Innocent's methods of persuasion, he had in great measure succeeded in

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 36.
[2] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 226.

restoring order to Roman society ; and, according to so unprejudiced a witness as Bishop Burnet, the extraordinary reform which had taken place in the morals of Rome did him honour. One great blot—involving many—remained upon the city, and it was with this that he now attempted to cope. The condition of the privileged quarters constituted a public scandal. Successive Popes had striven to remove it, and had failed. Innocent intended to succeed. But it was a delicate matter, involving the wounding of many susceptibilities, and imperilling vested interests.

From time immemorial the dependants of the various ambassadors had been exempted from interference on the part of the local police, the privilege having been gradually extended so as to include whole streets in the neighbourhood of the embassies, to which, nominally occupied by members of their households, flocked not only persons belonging to their several nationalities, but any Roman who had committed an indictable offence, and who, by claiming the protection of the ambassador, could secure immunity from punishment. The natural result ensued. The districts in question became hot-beds of crime and the resort of all persons who had put themselves within the reach of the law.

It was with this abuse that Innocent had determined to grapple, by issuing a decree that ambassadorial privileges should in future be restricted to the foreign palaces and households alone ; and it was in connection with this reform that he and Christina came into irreconcilable and hopeless collision. From her first arrival in Rome she had been placed in this respect upon the same footing as the representatives of reigning sovereigns ; and to her, no less than to them, the new regulations would consequently apply. Tenacious of her rights as she was, it would have caused no astonishment had she at once taken up arms in their defence.

In Christina's case, however, it was vain to prophesy, and, when the Pope's intentions became first known, she assumed an attitude which must have been a surprise to many. Far from resenting what she might have considered a curtailment of her privileges, she ranged herself with eagerness on Innocent's side. She would set an example of obedience ; she would be foremost in accepting the decree of the Holy Father. In this spirit she addressed to him a surprising letter,[1] professing her voluntary and spontaneous submission to his will, and only stipulating that the habitations of her servants should remain exempted from the jurisdiction of the law. "I confess," she added, with unaccustomed and dramatic humility, "that I only offer to your Holiness what is your own ; but neither can we offer to God aught that does not come from Him." With further expressions of deference she concluded this remarkable epistle from his most devoted and obedient daughter Christina ; removing, as it would seem, one obstacle in the way of reform, and leaving the Pope in a better position to cope with the foreign ambassadors. Into his struggle with the latter it is not necessary to enter ; the sequel to the Queen's act of submission was curious and instructive.

Her letter had been written in February, 1687, and had called forth a chorus of applause from those in favour of the proposed measure, the Viceroy of Naples in particular telling her that God had made her so great that she surpassed all others. The Queen no doubt was pleased with herself, and felt that, by her unexpected concessions, she had produced a startling and striking scenic effect. It remained to face the consequences, which was quite a different matter. In March she was probably still under the influence of a pleasant glow of self-approval ; and during that month, when she was upon the eve of engaging in a struggle

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 250.

with the Holy See, she wrote to a Professor Wasmuth, who desired to dedicate a work to her, making her consent conditional on the elimination of every word that implied a reflection upon the Catholic Church, "for which I am ready to give all the blood in my veins and a thousand lives, if I had as many." [1]

It is true that there was nothing necessarily inconsistent in opposition to the temporal claims of a pontiff and devotion to the Church of which he was the head. Christina was soon to make it clear that she was in no danger of confounding the two. In replying to the Viceroy's letter she had shown that her action had been prompted by no liking for Innocent, and that she was fully conscious of her magnanimity in overlooking the wrongs she had sustained at his hands. Her submission, she observed, would, she expected, have no other fruit than fresh discourtesy and fresh insults, her consolation being that God and the world would avenge the barbarous treatment she had received.

The state of mind thus indicated did not augur well for future peace. Nor was it long before it was seen precisely how much value was to be attached to the proffered pledge of obedience.[2] On Easter Day a certain vendor of contraband spirits, having been apprehended in the church in which he had taken refuge, was being conveyed to prison by the Papal police, when he contrived to escape from their clutches, and climbing on to a coach of Christina's which happened to be at hand, clung so firmly to it that it was found impossible to dislodge him. A cord had been thrown round his neck, and he was running the risk of being strangled, notwithstanding the indignation of a crowd who shouted protests against the tyranny of

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., p. 270.

[2] In his account of this episode, M. Arckenholtz relies upon two or three contemporary *Relations*.

law and the lack of respect shown to the Queen, when Christina herself, who had been engaged in her devotions, appeared upon the scene. Informed of what was going forward, her newborn submission suffered instant eclipse.

"Saisie d'une noble indignation," says the *Relation* giving an account of the affair, "she remained for some moments mute; but, suddenly breaking the silence, 'No,' she said, 'I could easily dissemble in a matter of this kind; but the Pope treats me with too much indignity, and I am determined to make use of this opportunity to show him that he is mistaken in thus dealing with me.'"

A servant was accordingly dispatched to threaten the police, who had by this time secured their captive, that, did they not release him, the Queen would know what to do. The vagueness of the menace perhaps contributed to render it alarming. At all events the officers of the law made no attempt at resistance, only entreating the *valet de pied* that their lives might be spared, and to Captain Landini, sent by the Queen to enforce obedience, they surrendered the culprit at once. Amidst cries of "Viva la Regina!" from the sympathetic crowd the rescued man was reconducted to sanctuary and placed in safety.

When the facts became known, opinions differed with regard to them. The Cardinal-Governor of the city defended Christina's action. Innocent naturally took a different view. The Queen, for her part, having once embarked in a course of resistance, was not disposed to abandon it; and in an interview with the Treasurer, Imperiali, accepted full responsibility for what had been done, and added that she would carry out what she had begun, and do more still should opportunity offer, being determined no longer to endure the treatment she had received. It was a declaration of war, met by the Pope in a like spirit. Landini and the

valet de pied personally concerned in interfering with the course of justice were indicted, and by the end of July their condemnation was placarded. It was true that they were safe under their mistress's protection ; she regarded none the less their sentence as a personal insult.

"In your tribunal to-day," she wrote to Mgr. Imperiali, "the dishonouring of yourself and your master receives the name of justice. I pity you ; I shall pity you still more when you become Cardinal. I give you my word that those you have condemned to death will, please God, continue to live for some time, and that, should they chance to die a death other than a natural one, they shall not die alone."

A dramatic scene then took place, when, addressing her Court, the Queen gave the members of it their dismissal. It was not, she said, that she lacked courage to protect them ; she was too well aware she had not the power ; advising them, therefore, to quit her service, she gave them full liberty to withdraw from it. The result was what she had doubtless anticipated. With tears, every one of her household threw themselves on their knees, protesting that they would live and die at her feet, and shed the last drop of their blood for their Queen ; and thus ended a scene "causing astonishment and stupefaction throughout Rome."

It was plainly to the interest of all concerned that peace should be restored ; and the Vatican made overtures to that end, assisted by the Spanish Ambassador. With the knowledge that she enjoyed the sympathy of the Roman public, Christina was however in no yielding mood. Greeted by the acclamations of the populace, she paraded the streets, the two offenders in her train, none daring to lay hands upon them ; and, with reference to a report that it was the desire of the authorities to render

her continued residence at Rome impossible, it was said that she had declared her intention of denying her foes the satisfaction of forcing her to quit it, and meant to live and die there.

Whilst she was herself acting in open defiance of the Pope, it was not surprising that her dependants, taking their cue from her, should feel at liberty to insult the members of the party opposed to them. But it was impossible to reckon with Christina's changing moods ; and when the young Marquis d'Ornani, one of her household, deliberately attempted to ride Mgr. Imperiali down upon the open road, she bade him apologise, and, upon his refusal, dismissed him from her service. To the Treasurer she made, as a propitiatory offering, a present of the fruit which, according to custom, and in spite of their present differences, had been sent her by the Pope, accompanying the gift by a courteous letter of regret.[1]

Negotiations were presently set on foot with a view of reconciling the belligerents, the confessors of Queen and Pope acting as intermediaries ; and in the end a paper was drawn up, in which the Queen solicited forgiveness from Innocent for herself and her servants, should they in any way have offended him, taking care to add that not one of her dependants had ever had the boldness to act without her express orders, and that she was at all times ready to afford his Holiness any just satisfaction that could be demanded of a person of her rank. She besought him in conclusion to give orders that she should no longer be subjected to the ignominious treatment she had undergone, and which she would rather die a thousand deaths than suffer longer.

By adroitly assuming sole responsibility for what had been done, Christina doubtless placed the Pope in a difficult position. Though returning a con-

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia.*

ciliatory answer, Innocent did not recede from his demand that the culprits should receive chastisement, if not at his hands, at those of their mistress; the Queen and her friends were indignant that her *quasi*-submission had not elicited a more generous response, and peace was no nearer than before. Recalling Ornani to her service, the Queen told him she rejoiced that he had refused to apologise to Mgr. Imperiali. "You did it nobly and with reason," she wrote. ". . . I thank you for your disobedience."[1]

Passing through the city with an armed train, and accompanied by the two delinquents, she again set the Pope at open defiance. Innocent, for his part—perhaps learning wisdom—took no notice of the act of bravado, merely remarking in reference to it "È donna," which, though undeniably true, was regarded by the Queen, when reported to her, as an unpardonable insult. It is unnecessary to pursue in detail the phases of the quarrel. Enough has been said to indicate the lines upon which it was conducted and the bitterness of spirit resulting from it.

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 277.

CHAPTER XXVII

1686–9

Old Age—Letter to Mademoiselle de Scudéry—Renewed struggles with the Pope—Death of del Monte—The Queen's last illness—Reconciliation with the Pope—Death and burial.

OLD age was creeping upon Christina—that enemy or friend whom, unless death steps in before it, all are called upon to face. To a woman whose life had been passed in strenuous activity, physical and mental, the inevitable adaptation to new circumstances and to failing strength was a harder matter than to others, and she looked back with wistful eyes to the past. "Those who have called youth a fever may be right," she once wrote; "but I would that fever could have lasted all my life, even though it might cause me to dream." "One would die almost inconsolable," she said in another place, "were it not that one grew old."

Christina, in growing old, had persuaded herself that she had assumed the attitude of a tranquil looker-on at life. Happy and contented, she told a correspondent in November 1686, she had become a calm spectator of what took place, amusing herself, "d'une manière très noble," with the comedy presented by the world. "Nevertheless," she added, "should the fiddles invite me to dance to a tune worthy of me, I will leap as I ought."[1] It has been seen that the

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 148.

requisite impulse was unfortunately supplied, and that she entered the field with all her old energy against Pope Innocent; but she probably believed what she said. A letter to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, who, in a letter of introduction given to a friend, had apparently asked the Queen for her portrait, affords a description of herself as she appeared in her own eyes at this period:

"I am no way embellished since the time when you saw me," she wrote; "I have preserved all my bad and good qualities, as entire and as strong as ever. I am still, flattery notwithstanding, as ill-satisfied with my person as I ever was. I envy neither fortune, nor vast possessions, nor treasure to those who possess them; but I should have desired to raise myself by merit and virtue above all mortals, and this is the cause of my dissatisfaction. For the rest, I am in perfect health, and shall remain so as long as it pleases God. I have naturally a great aversion to old age, nor do I know how I shall be able to accustom myself to it. Had I been given the choice between it and death, I believe I should have chosen the last without hesitation. But, since we are not consulted, I have accustomed myself to enjoy life. Death, which approaches and never fails to keep its time, does not disquiet me. I await it without either desire or fear." [1]

Christina was not destined to experience too prolonged a period of the old age she dreaded. The attacks of illness to which she had become subject—notwithstanding the successful treatment described in her letter to Bourdelot—had warned those who took an interest in the matter that her hold upon life might be insecure; and, as is inevitable in the case of a woman possessed of this world's goods and with no ostensible heir, covetous eyes were directed towards

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., pp. 272, 273.

the heritage she would leave behind her. Her long and close connection with Cardinal Azzolino pointed him out as the man most likely to benefit by her death ; and he was regarded with suspicion by those who conceived they had a better right to whatever she had to bequeath. With a view to making good his claims as her next-of-kin, the Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg reopened communications with her, adding to the letter and gifts sent through his envoy, the offer of a refuge and a home in his dominions, should she desire to escape from the annoyances inflicted upon her in Rome.

By Christina the renewal of intercourse with her cousin was welcomed. Childless, sisterless, brotherless, her position was singularly lonely, in what was, after all, a foreign land, and with not a man or woman amongst those around her to whom she was bound by any ties of blood. Nor was she ungrateful for the assurance that, should she at any time determine upon a change of residence, a country awaited her wherein she would be an honoured guest. But, though responding with cordiality to the Elector's advances, she did no more than play with the possibility that she would avail herself of his invitation. When, two years earlier, she had contemplated leaving Rome, she had written that it would be with a dagger in her heart ; and though, at the time of Frederick William's death and the accession of his son, negotiations were still pending, there can never have been much chance that they would be carried to a practical conclusion. To the young Elector's suggestion that she should proceed to Germany in order to assist at his father's funeral, she replied by declining to attend what she termed in a letter to Texeira the lugubrious fête at Brandenburg. "Having little in common with dead folk," she added, "I shall certainly not accept the invitation, and shall say, like the Spanish cavalier

invited to fight a duel, 'For such things, though much to my liking, I cannot rise early enough.'"

The year 1688—destined to be the last of Christina's life—began ill. In the preceding December she had again flaunted her disregard of the Papal decrees in the sight of all Rome by attending the function of the *laurea*—the conferring of a doctor's diploma—attended by the culprits upon whom sentence had been passed. Requested by Cardinal Spinola, governor of the city, not to repeat the act of defiance, she had, so far from showing penitence, replied by a message that, were Spinola not her friend, she would have had him flung out of her window, adding "a thousand ill words." It says much for Innocent's command of temper that, in spite of what had passed, he did not omit sending the Queen his customary Christmas gifts.[1] His long-suffering produced no good results. Though accepting his offerings, Christina's wrath was in nowise appeased; and early in the new year she was again in arms against the authorities. On this occasion her palace had afforded a refuge to a lady of doubtful reputation, who had made her escape from the convent wherein, with the consent of the Pope, she had been immured by her family. To Innocent's demand that the fugitive should be surrendered to her lawful guardians, Christina replied loftily that she was as safe in her house as in the convent; and, retaining her in the capacity of maid-of-honour, left no alternative to the Pope but to yield the point, imposing however the fine of 50,000 crowns now exacted from persons who took shelter in the old privileged quarters.[2]

Conduct of this kind was not calculated to improve the relations between Queen and Pope; nor was the alliance between Christina and the Marquis de Lavardin, recently arrived in Rome as French ambassador, more provocative of peace. The result of an enmity

[1] Clareta, *La Regina Cristina in Italia*, p. 297. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

is sometimes to cement or renew a friendship ; and Louis XIV., no less resentful than the Queen of the infringement of what he considered his lawful rights, had testified a desire to ignore his causes of complaint against her and to make common cause with a fellow sufferer. Christina had not been backward in responding to his advances ; and, when Innocent had taken the strong measure of excommunicating the French envoy, her offer to stand godmother to Lavardin's newborn infant indicated the attitude she had adopted towards the Holy See.

It is true that in a letter to M. Brémond, her Resident at the Hague, she again described herself in February as looking quietly on from her window at what was passing around her. It was nevertheless clear that her withdrawal from participation in the struggle, if indeed it had taken place, was no more than temporary, and that she was holding herself in readiness to descend and take part in the fray. Forecasting the possibility of a pacification between the contending parties, when she might be offered up as the victim of their reconciliation, she added that unexpected developments might then occur, and she would either perish or triumph over her foes. If some remains of respect for the Holy See had so far held her resentment suspended, that same respect might compel her to arrive at unexpected determinations, causing astonishment and admiration to all ages.[1]

It was not the language of a woman who would seek peace and ensue it ; and it is strange, or would be so, did not inconsistency between theory and practice come near to being universal, to compare utterances of the kind with the calm and wisdom of the reflections upon human life and conduct contained in her writings —writings which, to quote Ranke, "reveal an earnestness, a truth in her dealings with herself, a

[1] Arckenholtz, t. iv., p. 153.

freedom and firmness of mind, before which calumny is dumb."[1] Warlike as was her spirit, there must have been times, however, when she wearied of the fight. To end it by submission would have been nevertheless to purchase peace at too dear a price.

In the autumn a domestic sorrow withdrew her mind for the moment from her public grievances. This was the death of her old servant, del Monte ; who died suddenly, of apoplexy, whilst making preparations for a fête arranged to take place in spite of Papal orders to the contrary. Del Monte's reputation in Rome was bad, and legends of all kinds gathered round his end ; but Christina had been deeply attached to him, and her grief at his loss was profound. Wandering from room to room, she returned again and again to the chamber where the dead man lay ; and a letter addressed to his son, then acting as her envoy in Sweden, gave expression to her sorrow and goes far to explain the affection she inspired in her dependants. The language is that of a friend who mourns a friend, rather than of a mistress who regrets a servant.

The startling suddenness of the Marquis's death may have brought home to the Queen's mind the uncertainty of life, and on Christmas Eve she showed that her thoughts were occupied with her own approaching end. Without giving any indication of its significance, she had donned a garment of singular shape, fashioned out of white brocade, embroidered with flowers of gold. Upon the entrance of an attendant called Sybilla, in reference to certain occult powers she was held to possess, her meaning was made clear. What purpose, she asked the girl, testing her claims to divination, did she imagine this vestment was intended to serve ? Pressed to reply, the seer, reading her mistress's thoughts, answered that the Queen anticipated that it

[1] *History of the Popes*, vol. iii., pp. 73, 74.

would be used in no long time as a shroud. Christina admitted that she was right.

"It was of that that I was dreaming," she replied. "But it must be left in God's hands. We are all mortal—I no less than others."

Yet, if at times she indulged the thought of approaching death, it seems that, at this eleventh hour, her old restlessness of body and soul asserted its ascendancy, driving her to devise plans for a new manner of life; and she continued to entertain the project of leaving Rome and its dissensions, and finding a resting-place elsewhere, "which might secure for her the repose and happiness she so much desired." Her journey was to be a longer one than any she meditated.

In February she fell so seriously ill as to give rise to the persuasion that the end was at hand. A rally, however, took place, and on March 20 she wrote to inform Olivekrans, her Governor-General, of her recovery, in a letter displaying all her customary vigour of mind and language.

"God, against my hopes," she wrote, "has willed to tear me out of the arms of death; and I had already made up my mind to this last journey, which I believed inevitable. Nevertheless, I am full of life, by a miracle of grace, of nature, and of art; all having conspired to give me back health and life. The strength of my constitution has surmounted a malady which might have killed twenty Hercules. But I suppose it was grace which fortified that constitution to so surprising a degree that it causes admiration to the doctors." Though anticipating a long convalescence, she expressed the hope that Easter would see her recovery perfected; and, touching briefly on business, observed quite in her customary tone that in such matters the answer should be: "The Queen knows what she does, and what she ought to do."[1]

[1] Arckenholtz, t. ii., pp. 305, 306.

Public rejoicings celebrated her recovery, and Te Deums were sung in churches. Possibly, when Rome had come near to losing its troublesome, turbulent, generous guest, it had become aware to what extent she would be missed. Such rejoicings were short. Though on April 2 she was writing to Olivekrans of the future, it was for the last time.

"I am impatient to see you," she told the Governor-General, whom she had summoned to Rome, "and await you as the Jews await their Messiah. I have a hundred things to say which I cannot write, and I hope that you will be as well satisfied with me as I am with you." And she trusts he will find her perfectly well.

A relapse ensued, and seventeen days later, on April 19, 1689, she was dead.

Christina had always professed to feel no fear of death ; nor, brought face to face with it, did she give the lie to her boast, preparing for the end with calmness and tranquillity. At this last moment the desire to be at peace with all men vanquished pride. Albani, the Pope's Secretary, was summoned as soon as it became clear that the end was near, "whom she besought to make her excuses to the Pope for any expression which, through quickness of temper, might have escaped her against him." Albani, having done her errand, returned bringing the dying woman Innocent's absolution, Cardinal Ottoboni being the bearer of its confirmation and of the Papal blessing. Had it not been for his weakness—his own death was soon to follow—the Pope would, he said, have desired to bestow his benediction in person. Thus, after long strife, peace was made.[1]

All was in order. The Queen's will was signed,

[1] M. Arckenholtz places the reconciliation at this last moment. A contemporary account of the Queen's illness and death makes it take place when her life had been despaired of some weeks earlier.

leaving many bequests to servants and dependants, and constituting Azzolino her residuary legatee, "to whom, for his incomparable qualities, for his merits, and for the services he has rendered us during so many years, we owe this mark of affection, esteem, and gratitude." Day and night the Cardinal watched beside the dying woman, giving what orders were necessary, "as during the period of nearly thirty-three years that she had lived at Rome." There was nothing more to be done; it only remained to await the end.

On April 19 it came. Midday had struck, and she lay, as if resting, on her right side, her left hand at her throat. To the prayers offered up by the Vicar-General of the Carmelites and other priests present she had before made the responses. Then, with no movement nor any struggle, the last breath was drawn, and the storm-tossed and turbulent life was over.

Rome, when she was dead, forgot it had quarrelled with her; Innocent forgot his wrongs. All united in doing her honour, nor could the magnificence of her funeral have been exceeded had she fulfilled the expectations entertained when she had come, in all the brilliance of her youth, a convert from her northern home to make her submission at the feet of the sovereign pontiff. She had directed—perhaps from humility, perhaps from the overweening pride causing her to believe that adjectives or titles could only derogate from the lustre of her name—that her epitaph should consist simply of the words "D.O.M. Vixit Christina, annos LXIII.," "nor do we wish anything more or less." But it is proved every day that in such matters the desires of the dead are of small account; and wordy inscriptions were added in commemoration of her career. It was of little moment to her now whether or no her orders were obeyed.

Thus lived, and thus died, Christina, Queen of the Swedes, the Goths, and the Vandals. Of the Queen little remains to be told. Of the woman, what, in conclusion, shall be said? "È donna"—the comment of Pope Innocent—sums up, it may be, the case for and against her more aptly than any other. Indignantly as she would have repudiated the description, whether made in excuse or in censure; vehemently as she claimed exemption from the weaknesses and frailties natural to her sex; eagerly as she would have rejected any indulgence accorded to her on the score that she was not to be judged by the masculine standard, the fact remains that in gifts, virtues, deficiencies, faults, and failings, she was essentially feminine, and never more so than when she masqueraded as a man. Her egoism, her self-consciousness, her inordinate vanity, her rash confidence in those she trusted, her inability to learn from experience; her feverish activities of mind and body; her shifting aims; her brilliance and her versatility, her spendthrift generosity—all these traits and features, not necessarily unmasculine, assumed in her a peculiarly feminine character and colour. Her life was a tissue and series of contradictions and inconsistencies, dominated by a capricious will uncurbed by reason. Loving power, she spontaneously relinquished the means of exercising it; full of ambitions, she voluntarily abandoned the chances of their realisation; clear-sighted enough to appraise the value of a crown at its just worth, no breach of etiquette was too small in her eyes to be viewed with indifference; continually engaged in a struggle to obtain money, she squandered it with an open hand; self-confident and vain, she knew how to assume the lower place when confronted with intellectual superiority; and, strangest of all, arrogance, self-confidence, presumption, independence, with all kindred qualities, slipped from her like a garment in her dealings with

the one man for whom she cherished, to the last hour of her life, a veritable affection, leaving her in her relations with him humble and diffident as a child. The Christina known to the outer world, and the Christina who was Azzolino's friend, might almost be said to be personalities separate and distinct. After all, the explanation lies in Pope Innocent's words, "È donna."

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